Ethnic Culture of MANIPUR



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CHAPTER - I

The land of culture

Nestling deep within a lush green corner of North-east India is the wondrously beautiful little shangrila called Manipur, literally meaning a jewelled land, is a paradise on earth where mother nature has been extra generous in her beauty. And, from the very inception, this princely State of Manipur has always been a shinning outpost of the country in the sparse of the Eastern Himalayas. It never lost its basic link with the mainstream of the Indian culture.

In the Ashwamedha Parba of the Mahabharata, it is stated that Manipur was splendidly beautiful, the people are well cultured and religious minded exclusively attached to Lord Vasudeva-Krishna who is always in their thought. The people here are very simple and happy.They speak in sweet words. The striking aspect of Manipur, however, is its breath taking scenic beauty. Imphal, the capital city, is surrounded by hills -- Nongmaijing or Mahendra Parabata in the east and Longol in the north.

In the Mahabharata, Manipur is mentioned as the meeting place of Arjuna, the third Pandava and Chitrangada, the crown Princess of Manipur. Besides, there are numerous genealogy prevailing in Manipur relating to the land as reclaimed from water by Lord Siva's Trisul, while another line makes it the place illuminated by the jewel on the crown of Shesh Nag or Ananta Horop for

Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati to facilitate enact in the Rasleela after sunset. Spurred by the example of Lord Krishna and Srimati Radhika immersed in Ras Leela, their privacy guaranteed by Lord Siva as the gatekeeper, Goddess Parvati had requested Lord Siva to dance with her. The myth and lore of Manipur refers to the Supreme deity or dau Seidaba rubbing hands to create from the Gods and Goddesses the human being to people the new land Manipur.

However, scholars have different opinions as well as views regarding the exact location of the Mahabharatiya Manipur with that of the present Manipur of the North-east India. Dr.P.C.Choudhuri identifies Mareura with Manipur. Dr. Choudhuri says that "in the prehistoric period, some of the hilly regions may have been under water and some of the plains were higher than that we find today. Sadiya, for instance, must have been an island surrounded by water and Manipur may have been a lake and a flat valley." Geraini, however, locates the place somewhere in Upper Burma. He states that "Bishnupur was the ancient capital of Manipur and Imphal locally known as Kangla or Kangleipak was the capital of the Meitei Leipak of the latter period which finds mentioned in the Meitei Purana, i.e.Bijoy Panchalee". This Imphal came into existence in much later period than that of the city of Bishnupur or Bishenpur as stated by Prof. Padmanath Bhattacharjee.

McCulloch described that " The name Manipour accounted for by the Munniporie, who quote the Mahabharata in confirmation of its accuracy. They gave

the same from Muni, a jewel. This jewel formerly in the possession of the Rajas of the country ages ago. The country was at one time named Mahindrapore, but one Rajah by the name Manipur was in existence before the birth of Babhrubaha, and Mahindrapore or Mahindra Parbhata was the name of the hill, situated but a short distance to the east of the capital".

While commenting on the name of country, R.M.Nath states that the small kingdom of Manipur is situated on the eastern border of Assam on a table and surrounded by hills on all sides. It has a very large lake named Loktak, about 8 miles long, 5 miles wide having floating island on it.

In the Mahabharata, the country is mentioned as Meckley. In 1876 A.D., the King of Manipur used the same name referred to his Kingdom which is documented in the treaty with the British Government. In the old Assamese records, Manipur is mentioned as Magloo or Moghlai country. In Sylhet and Cachar the Manipuris are called as the Mei-Moghlais in common parlance. The Burmese call the country as Cassey or Kassey.

Physiography

The present State of Manipur is geographically bounded by Nagaland in the North, Mizoram in the South, Cachar district of Assam in the West and bordering Burma in the East.

The land surface of Manipur is 22, 347 sq. kms. and about 90% of the land is mountainous. Its rain varies between 2,600 to 3,350 centimeters. It has also an

enjoyable climate almost throughout the year and free from the rigours of both summer and winter.

The rivers also served as the important waterway link with different parts of Manipur valley connecting Imphal, the capital city. The major river of the land is known as Imphal after which the capital city was named. The other rivers smaller than the river Imphal are the Iril, Thoubal, Irang, Nambul etc. Other small tributaries, viz. Jiri and Chiri constitute the river Bairak or Borak.

Manipur's sceneric beauty, lake and water resources, craftsmanship etc. are encompassed and picturesque. It is full of various orchids. Manipur is also famous for its dances and rare and beautiful exquisite handicrafts. It has its famous Vishnu Mandir at Bishnupur or Bishenpur, Govinda Mandir at Imphal, and the Loktak lake, the biggest fresh water lake in India. Presently, the lake is projected with a Hydro-Electric power plant. The Rathband Bazar or Thangal Bazar of Khuwai at Imphal is administered entirely by the women folk and is the largest Asian market of its kind. Keibul Lamjao is the only floated national park located in Manipur. The Orchid yard of Khongapat is attractive as well as famous too.

The Shiroy Lily

It is grown at the peak of the Shiroy Kashong Mountain at a height of 8,400 feet above sea level situated in Ukhrul district of Manipur.

The Shiroy Lily belongs to Lilium family, but unique in character. By using a microscopic lens, seven colours which claimed its superiority to other lilies in the

world can be seen light pink in colour. The height of the plant varies from 2 ft. to 3½ ft. depending on the soil's fertility. Shiroy Lily is not grown anywhere in the world accept Shiroy Kashong of Manipur. It is said that Princess Chitrangoda of Manipur had own the heart of Arjuna in her first meeting by offering a Shiroy Lily. Arjuna was so impressed with the beauty and fragrance of the flower that he at once lost himself on her.

This Shiroy Lily starts blooming during the months of May-June every year on the laden mineral mountain of the Shiroy. It was discovered first by a British naturalist Mr. Kingdom Ward, who gave it the Botanical name Lilium Mackleanae and won him the show in London in the year 1948.

Administrative units

Manipur was an independent princely State earlier. In 1891, it become a British protectorate. The State later on merged with the Union of India on October 15, 1949. It was then categorised as a 'C' group State on January 26, 1960 and finally on January 21,1972, she got her full Statehood within constitutional limits of India.

Presently, it is divided into eight administrative units, i.e. districts. These are again distributed as Valley Districts consisting of Bishnupur or Bishenpur, Imphal and Thoubal and Hills Districts includes Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur and Chandel. Besides, there are nine other important towns and about 2089 villages in the State. It has six Autonomous District Councils. They are Tengnoura Autonomous District Council, Sadar

Hills Autonomous District Council, Manipur North Autonomous District Council, Manipur South Autonomous District Council, Manipur East Autonomous District Council and Manipur West Autonomous District Councils. All these administrative units are well and properly connected with the State Administration. Imphal, the capital city of the State of Manipur is the largest and an important city having over one and half lakh population. The population of Bishnupur and Moirang are 1,79,903 (Males : 90,415 and Females : 89,488) as in 1993 census.

The State symbol

The State symbol or emblem of Manipur is Kanglasha (Nongsaba), i.e. half lion and half dragon. Sangai or brown antelope deer is the State animal, while Nongin remained as the State bird. Uningthiu is regarded as the State tree and the world famous Shiroy Lily (Lilium) is the State flower of Manipur. Friday, January 21(1972) is the Statehood day and Date of Manipur.

Manipuri Dance

The style is mostly ritualistic and categorically Aryan in character. Its dance-drama technique draws heavily from the rich lore of legend and mythology. Maharaja Bhagyachandra Singha (1764-1789), the King of Manipur introduced the Manipuri Dance, i.e. Maha Rasleela in the Manipur valley during his reign. His daughter who is said to have performed the part of Radha in the Rasleela later on became Sija Lai Oibi (Princess who became a Goddess) devoting her life to worship. ❑

CHAPTER - II

The people

Manipur is the land of people of diverse origins, but of a unique culture. Her different ethnic groups of people are living together for centuries with peace and harmony. Majority people of the State are the Manipuris. They are again sub-divided into two racial and linguistic groups namely : Bishnupriya Manipuri and Meitei. The former group of the people traced their ancestry with the Arjuna-Chitrangoda-Babhrubahana episode of the Mahabharata and claiming to be the Kshatriyas of the Aryans origin while the later section identified themselves as the Kuki-Chin branch of the Mongolian stock.

Referring to the people and ethnic division of Manipur E. M. Dun states that "The native State of Manipur consist of both civilised Hindus and barbarous Tribes" The name of Manipur is only applicable , properly speaking to the Hindu dwellers . The Manipuris are, again supposed to be descendent of four old tribes, called Kshumal, Luang, Moirang and Meitei[1] which are known to have inhabited the valley of Manipur at not very distant period. They still call themselves as Meitei and are divided into seven families, the members of which do not intermarry, and whose names perpetuate the memory of the original tribal divisions. While explaining the appearance of these Manipuris, Dr. Brown says, "Although the

general facial characteristics of the Mannipurie are of Mongolian type, there is a great diversity of features among them. some of them showing the regularity approaching the Aryan type".

Among the Manipuris, at the time when Colonel McCulloch wrote his remarkable accounts of the valley, there were legend which induced him to believe that "From the most credible traditions the valley appears to have been occupied by several tribes, the principal of which were Khoomal, Looang, Moirang, and Meitei, all of whom came from different directions. For a time the Khoomal, appears to have been the most powerful and after its declension, the Moirang tribe. But, by degrees, the Meiteis subdued the whole, and the name Meithei has become applicable to all. Since their conversion to Hinduism, the Meitheis have claimed for themselves a Hindu descent". Captain Pemberton rejects that claim in his Report of the Eastern Frontier and says, "We may safely conclude them to be descendants from a Tartar colony from China; the Meitheis adopted Hinduism in the 18th century only."

Again, if we talk of the history in respect of the Aryan population, their migration, settlements and cultural penetration and the development of political institutions in Manipur valley, there are little source of informations which provide us indirect and fragmentary evidence to a number of place names not necessarily connected with relevant chronology. However, the Puranas etc. compiled especially for recording history, have conspicuously ignored the important chapters on the Bishnupriya Manipuris. Even then, we do set some stray reference in

the great epic, i.e. the Mahabharata and puranas like Kshumal Purana, Bijoy Panchalee and other secular works. Ancient temples like the Vishnu temple of Bishenpur, Govindajiew temple of Imphal, the Kohima Stone, old palaces and other related buildings etc. supply us little more historical informations likewise for studying the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Furthermore, the establishment of an Indo-Aryan State in the remote period in Manipur valley is indicated by Geraini. Geraini, commenting of Ptolemy's Geography observes, "From the Brahmaputra and Manipur to the Tonkin Gulf, we can trace a continuous string of petty States ruled by those scions of the Kshatriya race, using the Sanskrit or the Pali languages in official documents and inscriptions, buildings, temples and monuments of Hindu style and employing Brahmin priests at the propitiatory ceremonies connected with the court, and the State."

From the above observation, it can be presumed with certainty that the Bishnupriya Manipuris established a petty State - Kshumal kingdom with Vishnupur or Bishenpur as its capital that formed in course of the migration of the Aryans to the east. The existence of the Vishnu temple at Vishnupur (Bishenpur) and the reference of the existence of Devavasa, i.e. Sanskrit prior to the advent of the Meitei and their language are the other testimonies of the foundation of the Bishnupriya Manipuris in Manipur in the ancient past.

The Meitei

It is a deep mixed ethnic group supposed to have

their descent form the Tibeto-Chinese stock. They indicate much cultural affinity with the people of Thailand or Indosesia (Sri Y.Nilakanta Singha, The Grandeur, p.38). This people are of medium figure, fair skinned and mostly of half-closed eyes like that of the Chinese or Japanese people. Their hair is normally straight and they are of flat-nosed type. They are modest and civilised in character.

Referring to the origin of the Meitei who presently call themselves as Manipuri, Prof. E. Nilkanta Singha states that " It is still shrouded in mystery (The Common Quest of North-East India, published by the DIPR, Govt. of Assam, Nov. 15, 76; p.116). Modern researches have pointed out an unwavering finger to the east, possibly Thailand or some other parts of South-East Asia from where migrative waves of this people revealed considerable affinity with those of the East". In the opinion of R.M.Nath, the Meiteis were the later immigrants to Manipur. Their language and habits etc. are more Mongolian in character than Aryan (people).

The Meiteis are said to be divided into seven soloi or clans. These are Angom, Luang, Moirang, Kshuman, Ninghouja, Khaba and Nangba (R.M.Nath, The Background of Assamese Culture, p.84; Major McCulloch, Account of the Valley of Manipore (in Selection from the records of the Govt. of India, No. XXVII). E.T. Delton states that " In their own country they appear to oscillate between the wild paganism, unsophisticated manners, and savage customs of their hill cousin." Looking into genealogy and traditions purporting the origin of the Meiteis, McCulloch

and Damant (1877:37) conclude that " The Manipuris are a conglomeration of several distinct tribes"- (R.K. Saha, Valley Society of Manipur, p.58/60). Damant states that from the peculiarities found in the grammar of all three languages, namely Naga, Kuki and Manipuri as well as the Lushai languages, it is probable that they were derived form the same stock. Hodson goes far beyond it. He mentions : "The structure and vocabulary of the Meithei language is alike those of the Tibeto-Burman races"

Grierson, on the other hand, place the Meitei language into Tibeto-Burman family under Kuki-Chin group of languages, agreed to that of the language of the Kuki groups on the hills of Manipur (T.C. Hodson, The Meitheis, p.11).

Some of the British administrators and scholars like McColloch, Johnstone and Brown, on the basis of dress, and Hodson, from the view-points of other aspects of culture, especilly marriage rules, finds affinities between the Meiteis and the Naga-Kuki tribes of the Hills of Manipur. R.K. Saha refers that "the coronation ceremony of the Meitei was performed in Naga dress and the existance of Yim Chau - a great house of Naga style in the palace, the dress of the partcipants in boat race are the examples that the Meitei retained some of the customs of the Hill people." Hodson has added : " two hundred years ago, in internal organisation, in religion, in habits and manner, the Meities were as the Hill people now are. The successive waves of foreign invasions, Shan, Burmese, English, Hindu have each left permanent marks on the civilization of the valley so that they have passed finally

away from the stage of relatively primitive culture into one of comperative civilisation, but their ultimate homogeneity with the Nagas and Kukis of the hills is undoubted and in my opinion need no further insistence."

The above mentioned community has been vividly described as Meitei, Meithei, Munnipooree, Munnipuris, Munipuris, Manipuri likewise in literature and records etc. by different authors. However, as there are lack of sufficient historical materials, it is clumsy to trace the real nature of connection between the Meiteis and the hill tribes. It is an admitted fact that at one time the Meiteis even used to marry Naga girls (R.K.Saha, Valley Society of Manipur, p.60). In later period, the Meiteis when they came in contact with the Ramauti Vaishnavism gave up some primitive habits and customs that were similar to those of the hill tribes.

The Meities worship their ancestral Gods and Godesses in the festival known as Lai-Haruba. Senamahism, - a local cult is also prevailing among the Meitei community. They acquinted and adopted the Gaudiya Vaishnavism (Ramauti) as a religion only in the 18th.century A.D. by observing the ceremony of the Nongkhrang Iruppa or the ablusion of Nongkhram (R.M.Nath, The Background of Assamese Culture). The cult of Gaudiya Vaishnavism came to the valley of Manipur so as to say to fulfill and reborn. The Meiteis, however, witnessed the other major religions like Christianity and Islamism. Their counterparts, the Bishnupriya Manipuris, on the other hand, are highly conservatives in character devoted to strict Vedic culture and

traditions and uptill now they retained Hinduism without deviation to any other religions.

The Loi

It may be observed that Lois, who are either earlier settlers or the direct descendants of the Meiteis, a title applied to the inhabitants of the number of villages which are at a distance form Imphal, are of various origin. Fayeng Loi, however, preserves a tradition that they once occupied the site of Konug or the fort from which they were driven out by Pakhumba, indicates the rise of the Meitei power. The village of Chairel, situated on the Imphal river, not far from Shuganu, declare that they once occupied the slopes of Nongmaiching or Nongmaijing. The villages on the Loktak, Thanga and Iting are known to have had their origin, as penal settlements to which all classes of offenders were sent. McCulloch states that the appointment of an official with the style and title of Budhiraja to govern Kokching dates from the reign of Gharib Nawaz (T.C. Hodson, The Meitheis, p.9).

Another version propagated by the Meitei is that the Lois are the original Meiteis in customs and traditions. References are there that the word Loi has been used to indicate a low status of the ethnic group in derogatory sense. On the contrary, some of the members of the ethnic group do not like to call themselves Loi because of its derogatory connotation. They better prefer to identify themselves simply Chakpa or Chakpai.

Brown opines that "Loi is not recognised as pure Manipuri; they appear to be descendents of the former

inhabitants of Moirang, one of the original tribes which formerly occupied the valley to the south. They were formerly independent, but were reduced ages ago by the Meiteis; hence the name Loi or subdued, which was given to them after their subjection". Dun identifies the Loi as the people of the five villages situated in the west and north-west of the valley closed to the hills who are engaged in silk culture. The Meitei, on the other hand, treated the Lois as a tributary group who used to pay tributes to the Meitei King during their rule. The King in turn allowed them to use Sagei or Sakei, i.e. lineage as their forename. They also used the title Singh. Their main occupations are distillations, poultry, farming, sericulture, swine rearing, pottery making and so on.

Like the Meiteis the Loi has their live cycles of rituals, of course, without Vaishnava elements. Senamahi and Laimaren are worshipped as the God and Godesses respectively in the same way as the Meitei do, though not regularly. Although most of the Loi have accepted Vaishnavism, the Hindunised Meitei inclining to consider the former as pure Vaishnava. Even Brahmins do not serve them in certain occasions. The Lois are not allowed to participate in the social feast and ceremonies along with the Meiteis. Interestingly, according to the Meiteis, their (Loi) dialect is marked by defective pronunciation and bad quality. They do not use respectful terms for seniors.

The Yaithibi

The term Yaithibi is derogatory. It refers of illegal

birth and of immoral habits. By illegal birth, it refers to the issues that were born of prohibited mates such as step-mother and son, brother and sister and so on. By person of immoral habits, it is meant that they have no religion and pay no regards to the social norms. In fact, the literal meaning of the term Yaithibi stands for 'bad luck'-(Yai=luck : tibi=bad). It is said that due to the injustice shown to them by the King, probably King Garib Nawaz (1709-1749), and some others of his favourites, they were compelled to accept their present low position in the society. By quoting the Yaithibi traditions, R. K. Saha narrates two stories regarding them; one related the illicit relation of a few favoured people of the King with the Queen which ultimately resulted into the ex-communication of those favoured people along with their kiths and kins and the other refers to the conflict between the King Garib Nawaz and the Prince Ajit Shai for intending to marry a same girl named Laishram Ningol Thambal Nganbi. It refers that the timely intervenion of the royal pandit Lairengbam Khongnangrahaba prevented the imminent in-fighting between father and son, i.e. the King Garib Nawaz and Prince Ajit Shai.

Prince Ajit Shai was, however, very much dissatisfied with his father and the girl too, to whom he had lost himself once. When the Prince ascended the throne of Manipur after the death of King Garib Nawaz, he exiled Thambal Nganbi along with her relatives on the plea that she had her illegal relations with the late King. These people, in course of time, came to be known as the Yaithibi or the bad-lucked people.

Brown has mentioned that " the Eithibee (Yaithibi) are the exiled people and they used to perform the scavengers job in the palace only for the Raja and the family". Despite all related stories, narrations and stereotypes, there is a general consensus present in respect of the assumption that the Yaithibis are a part and parcel of the Meitei indigenous culture and society as well.

The hill tribes

Ethnically the hill tribes of Manipur, supposed to be the Gandharva's, though divided into a number of clans and sections, may be grouped under the two great divisions - Naga and Kuki (E.W. Dun, Gazetter of Manipur,1886, p.28-32). The Nagas are scattered over the hill districts of Manipur, but chiefly to the west, north and north-east, while the Kukis are dwelling in the mountain districts of Manipur scatteredly.

Capt. E.W.Dun indicting the references provided by J. Johnstone (1885) states " the derivation of the name Naga is doubtful and may be derived from Assamese word Noga or Naked, but the name is used in the Mahabharata, and they are described as beautiful dragonlike being against whom the hero, Arjuna fought. The Manipuris call all hill tribes by the general term how or haw, unless they know the particular tribe, in which case they give the tribal name".

The origin of the term Kuki is not certainly known. According to E.W.Dun, " the whole wild tribes who dwell in the mountain district contained between Bengal and Burma, Cachar and Manipur and Arakan, have received

this designtion, i.e. Kuki. The Kukis at present moving towards northwards. They have even moved across the vallies of Cachar and Manipur, and occupied the lower slopes on either side of the Barail Ranges".The people on the spot have been led to classify them as old arrivals and new arrivals or old Kuki and new Kukis.

There are about seventeen ethnic groups prominent among them are Ao, Angami, Sema, Rengma, Chakhesang-chokri, Konyak, Phom, Chang, Kuki, Chiru, Rengmai, Khezha, Yimchunger, Khiemnumgam, Zeliang, Sangtam, Pochury, Lotha, Makware, Tikhir and others.

The Thangsas living in Tirap and Kamenglong districts of Arunachal Pradesh are also Nagas. The Tangkhul and Kabui Nagas residing in Manipur are highly developed. Though there exists ethnic differences among the various groups of the Nagas residing in Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and other places they stoutly claim themselves as Nagas, belongs to the Indo-Mongoloid origin. Majority of Nagas are Christians but the number of Hindu Nagas are also not negligible.

The various ethnic groups of Nagas who speak diverse languages and wear diverse dresses have distinct cultures of their own. They are fond of art and music and observe folk festivals all the year round. The Kukis observe Mimkut in January, the Angamis observe Sekrenyi in February, the Chansangs observe Tsukhenyi in March-April, the Phoms observe Monyu in April, the Khiamngan observe Miu in the second week of May, the Aos observe Moatsu in the first week of May, the Semas observe Tulini in July, the Changs observe Nkanyulum

in July 2nd week, the Pochuris observe Nazu in July-August, the Yimchungers observe Metemneo in the second week of August, the Sangtams observe Amongmong in the first half of September, the Lothas observe Tokhuemong in the first week of November, the Rengmas observe Ngada and the Zeliangs observe Nga-Ngai with pomp and gaiety in December.

The Nagas like and give due respect to their own (indigenous) goods. They are very advanced in handlooms and handicrafts. The multicoloured Naga shawls are very beautiful. Handicraft goods made of bamboos are also very attractive. The Nagas consider handloom and handicraft as respectable occupations.

The Bishnupriya Manipuri

Referring to the people of Manipur, R.M.Nath in his book, The Back Ground of Assamese Culture, states that " The Bishnupriya Manipuris were the first cultured and ruling race in Manipur, but were driven out from power when the Meiteis of the Kuki-Chin origin of the Mongolian stock occupied Manipur valley in the eighteenth century." E.T. Dalton also held that "By degrees, Meiteis become dominant in Manipur and now they claimed to be Hindu descendant. And, this hordes overrun a country that has been previously occupied by the people of the Aryan blood known in the Western India and to the bards." This Aryan people were presumed to be the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

It is claimed that the Bishnupriya Manipuris are the Kshatriyas and a fine stalwart race descended from

Aryan blood with some admixture of the Mongoloid stock. They derived form the successive waves of Aryan invaders associated with Arjuna's exploits that have passed through the valley of Manipur in pre-Christian era. This people trace their ethnic origin with the Arjuna-Chitrangoda line of the Mahabharata. They are physically able bodied, and are exceptionally tall in figure in comparision to the other racial groups of the Northeast region.

Different writers covered-up this ethnic group in their works with different names. Some call it Bishnupuriya or Bishnupriya or Manipuri Bishnupriya, the other refers to it as Mayang or Kalisa and so on. Commenting on the nomenclature as stated above, late Jagot Mohan Singha, a renowned social activist, asserts that these titles are wrong asumption about this people who are for valid reason Bishnupriya Manipuri only by term and form. Dr. K.P. Sinha also strongly refuted to call the Bishnupriya Manipuri as Mayang which was frequently used in the writings of Major McCulloch, G.A. Grierson, E.A. Gait, Padmanath Vidya Vinod, Dr. Maheshwar Neog, Dr. Suniti Kr. Chatterjee and others.

The Bishnupriya Manipuris never called themselves as Mayang. It is a term used by the Meiteis in a degrading sense. In Meitei, the Mayang means foreigner, westerner, just as the Bishnupriya Manipuris called the Meitei Khai[2] as the later were regarded as the emigrant form Thailand. In a derogatory sense, the Meiteis call the former Kalisa[3] and the Bishnupriya Manipuris counters the Meiteis with Akoksa[4].

The word Mi/Me=man or men+yang=light or the

young worrier, i.e. Miyang Mayang or Mayam may be explained in the following manner : Miyang> Mayang> Meying> Miyam> Meyam> Meenam> Mekong> Myanaung.The very word Miyang or Mayang denotes a group of young worriors, while Miyam or Mayam testifies : Mi or Me=man or men+yam=large number, i.e. the word Miyam or Mayom stands for a group of people in large number. The Bishnupriya Manipuri people whereever they made their settlements, they choose the river bankside. The people of Meenam and Mekong valley may have the common affinity with the Miyang>Meyang or the Miyam>Meyams. R.K.Kanchan in his work Hindu Kingdoms of South-East Asia (p.77-78) narrating the route of Hindu migrants states, "Starting from Assam or Manipur, the Hindu migrants had to cross a chain of mountains, limitless gorges, violent rivers, striking marches and uneven high plateaus spread over miles with no end in sight. On the other way they gathered men form Indo-Tibetan community and recruited local mountain people to enlarge their numbers. Having thus befriended on equal terms and collecting a force of strength, Hindu migrants traversed the high mountains crossed untamable violent rivers and continued establishing Hindu settlements on the river banks and adjacent to other watershed of perennial water supply. In their onward march, they traversed the entire region covering the territories of modern Burma, Thailand, Laos, Yunnam province of China, Kampuchea and Vietnam. Their onward march could be stopped only by the pacific after they had reached the eastern end of Asia. The river valleys of Irawadi, Chinduin, Sittagang,

Meenam, Mekong and Red river were the regions of prefe rence where the migrants established their settlements, each of which was an independent principality". Furthermore, Myanmar the very present nomenclature of Burma, which was also the ancient name of the respective country may supply informations in regards the Miyam or Meyams in general. This awaits further research.

It is to be noted here that in regards to nomenclature, there are some common errors towards different linguistic groups, even to the most developed languages such as the Assamese and Bengali, too. Both the words Assemese and Bengali itself are the English term. The Assamese identify themselves simply as Asomiya or Assomiya or Akhomiya (असमीया, अखमीया), not as Asami (आसामी) or Ahomi (अहमी) or Ahomiya (अहमीया) what generally the non-Assamese used to call or pronounce it misconceptionally. So is to Bengali. In Hindi, it is Bongali (बंगाली), Asamese call it Bongwali (बङाली). But it is Bangali (बाङाली) to refer the Bengali people, and Bangla (बाङ्ला) to mean its language. And, in case of the Bishnupriya Manipuri and Assamese, too, the very nomenclature itself testifying dually both the language and the people as well.

Briefing on the Bishnupriya Manipuris, Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Haque, Chairperson of the Assam Backward Class Commission, recommended to the State Government of Assam recently (Oct. 1995), the extract of which read as : "The Bishnupriyas entered Manipur from west and their original spoken language was Indo-Aryan group slightly akin to Bengali. The Bishnupriya people were purely followers of Vishnu-cult from very ancient

times. They installed the image of Lord Vishnu at Bishnupur, a place in Manipur. The centre of culture of this people being at Bishnupur, so they were named Bishnupriyas (inhabitants of Bishnupur) and thus Bishnupriya was a contracted form of Bishnupriya. This tradition is confirmed with the name Bishnupriya Manipuri in the record of G.A.Grierson.

Sir George Grieson in his work : Linguistic Survey of India described Bishnupriya section as Bishnupriya Manipuri and their language as Bishnupriya Manipuri. This view had been accepted and recognised by all the authorities in India. The Linguistic Minority Commission in India in its 20th report for the period July 1978 - June, 1980 at para 33.24 made positive recommendation that : On the basis of the report of Sir Grierson classifying the Bishnupriya Manipuri as the distinct language, the Registrar General of Census, Govt. of India provided Bishnupriya Manipuri as a separate mother-tongue in their code for the 1981 Census, the demand of the speakers of the Bishnupriya regarding nomenclature of their language as Bishnupriya Manipuri appears reasonable and justified."

The Bishnpriya Manipuri population deeply rooted in Manipur, now-a-days living scatteredly in the North-Eastern region of India and its neighbouring overseas countries, namely Bangladesh and Burma(Myanmar). When and why this people left Manipur valley and there after settled in other places remains a matter of debate.

There are controversies among the scholars about the migration of the Bishnupriya Manipuris of the Kshumal

Kingdom and other places of Manipur valley. It is, however, conceived that most of them were either migrated to other regions in search of new settlement or they were forced to leave the valley during the early parts of the 18th century owing to the internal conflicts amongst the Princes of Manipur namely Chourjit, Marjit and Gambhir Singha.

In the writings of Chandra Mohan Rajkumar, it is attributed to the fact that during the Burmese onslaught, commonly known as Auwar Bhagon or Auwar Dauwa over Manipur, and also during the period of the Anglo-Burmese War (1819-1826), a large number of the Bishnupriya Manipuris escaped and fled away from Manipur to Cachar, Tripura and other safer places. On their way some of them were made captive by the Burmese invaders and taken them away to Burma. The fate for the few those who stayed in Manipur, they had to face the turbulent Meiteis for which they gradually began to forget their original language. They were forced to merge with the Meitei population. The British Government, too, got migrated many Bishnupriya Manipuris during and after the First World War for the regimental and manual works. Thus, this people were scattered and reduced to a great extent in different parts of country. The Bishnupriya Manipuris, when they forced to leave their motherland (Manipur) however, carrying with them their language, tradition and culture.

In the Manipur valley the Bishnupriya Manipuri have its population base in Bishnupur or Bishenpur, Mayang Imphal[5], Loktak, Heirok, Machou, Ngaikhong, Khunau, Wangjing with its headquarter at Ningthoukhong.

It has a corroboration in the writings of Dr. M.Kirti Singha, and E.W.Dun, the Gazetteer of Manipur (Ref. Section on the people Vishnupriya). It is cherished in the works of Sena Singha, R.M.Nath and many other secular writings.

However, the people of the above mentioned places, who identified themselves to be the Bishnupriya Manipuri neither speak nor understand their original language, the only similarities of these people with their kinsmen, i.e. the Bishnupriya Manipuris living outside Manipur is found in their appearance and complexion. Some people have a little knowledge of their language (Bishnupriya Manipuri), but can not speak it properly. A small section of this people are also inhabitating in Imphal. It is to be noted here that the Ahom, when they had established their kingdom in Assam, within no time they forgot their own Tai or Thai language, instead they adopted the local (Kamrupi) language better known as the Assamese . The Meitei Muslims or the Pangans who entered Manipur only in the 18th century A.D. also totally forgots their original language and now they accepted the Meitei language. The Bishnupriya Manipuri population of the Jirighat Sub-division of Manipur has proper knowledge about their original language.

During the period between 1970 to 1974, R.K.Saha, as a member of the Anthropological Survey of India, has conducted an intensive anthropological study on the six ethnic groups[6] of Manipur in 19 selected villages. However, he limited his intensive field works in four villages, namely Lairenkabi (A Meitei village), Nachou (a Bishnupriya Manipuri village), Thoubal Khunou (a

Yaithibi village) and Phayeng (a Loi or Chakpa village). He a so carried out his pilot studies etc. in the villages of Andro, Shugnu, Ngaikhongkhulen, Kakching, Chairel, Ithing, Wang Thangi, Ningel, Sekmai, Urup, Thoubal, Moirang, Imphal, Bishnupur and Thing.

Mr. Saha, in his work : Valley Society of Manipur (p.42/45), recorded that the village of Nachou is dominated by the Bishnupriyas. The Meitei people of this village immigrated here in search of cultivable land and finally settled down. Ngaikhongkhulen is also a Bishnupriya village. There are some Meitei households in a portion of the village. This area is known as Sepoy. They are believed to have settled in this village as soldiers of the King. The inhabitants of Nachou and Ngaikhongkhulen have registered their identity as Bishnupriya. The villages of Chairel, Andro and Sekmai are dominated by the Loi or Chakpai, while Urup was settled by the Pangan or Meitei Muslims. The inhabitants of Lairankabi and Wangkhei Thangjam Leikei identified only as Meitei. Ethnic-wise village population data partaining to the research works of R.K.Saha (Table No. 1, p.43 and Table No.3, p.53) shows that the Bishnupriya Manipuris are the majority people among the nineteen villages of Manipur valley studied so far.

There are a large number of Bishnupriya Manipuri people settled in Assam ages ago, particularly in the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. This people are counted as one of the major group of people in Cachar and Karimganj districts of Assam.

Bishnupriya Manipuri sub-areas of Cachar district

are i) Narsingpur Pargona, ii) Meherpur Pargona, iii) Jatrapur Pargona, iv) Silchar city and v) Bikrampur Pargona.

The Bishnupriya Manipuri village of the Narsingpur Pargona includes South Bekirpar(Gudamghat or Panibhora), Rengti, Shantipur, Bhatirgram, Khunou, Tuk, Gosaipur, Ratanpur, Katakhal (East), Katakhal (West), Namita Nagar (South-East Katakhal), Purupthol, Rampu, Paloi, Hingor Haour, Kala Haour, Rakhaltilla, Dulalgram and Malugram.

Meherpur Pargona constitutes with East Singari, West Singari, Bhagatpur, Chandrapur, Rengti, Bhagadahar, Nuwalam, Kalinjar, Mungor Dharam, Pithir Dharam, Chengcoorie and Kabirgang etc. Jatrapur Pargona has Srikona, Machughat or Ngaikhongang, Dutpatil or Durpatuli, Machimpur, 8-Dabol, Rajnagar and Bhagorangon. While Bikrampur, Lakshmipur, Sydpur, Kalain, Baropuwa or Bhubaneshwar Nagar, Bihara, Tengaragang, Burunga, Longhor, Bilorgang, Mohanpur, Sayaran and Dutpur falls within the jurisdiction of Bikrampur Pargona.

Silchar, the district head quarter of Cachar, Assam witnessed Bishnupriya Manipuri bases at Bishnupur, Vivekananda Road, Jalupara, Police Lane, Reserve, Itkhola, Malugram, Tikorbasti, Ranghirkhari, Ghunghur and other parts of the city. At Duwarbond, a few kms. away from Silchar has its Bishnupriya Manipuri population there.

In Hailakandi district, the population has a root at Hailakandi town, Sunapur, Khunou, Kshumel collectively

known as Japirbond. Katakhal (Railway Jgn.), Nandirgang, Andurgang, a part of Chengcoorie and Chungduwar are included in the Hailakandi district.

Karimganj district of Assam has much more Bishnupriya Manipuri villages than that of Cachar and Hailakandi. The thickly populated laoclities of the district are Garerbond, Anipur, Kukitilla, Andhurgang, Amurkhal, Awalala, Dhalibil, Panchdali, Fechuakandi, Pechala, Tingari, Betubari, Dullabchera, Ullasnagar, Khiluwa, Fanaibon, Aringtilla, Baskaltitta, Chamtilla, East Krishnapur, West Krishnapur, Gergoang, Rupa, Fetipat, Butuchera and Bidyanagar at the Dullabcherra zone of the district, while Pratapgarh zone of the district has its Bishnupriya Manipuri populated villages of Patherkandi, Rajargang, Kachubari, Unam, Narayanpur, Moiranggaon, Leishranggaon, Menjbari, Bhitorgul, Bauta tilla, 2-Number, Korikhai, Madhubon, Betarbon, Jamirala, Katabari, Lakshmi Mamila, Bitorgol, Kanai, Nuwagang, Bazarichara, Hatikhira, Bilbari, Khalibari, Satara Lokei, Burunga, Luwarpuwa, Shiborkhol or Shiborgol, Betubari, Kehurgang, Rengti, Katabari, Seipargang, Soura Lokei, Mambari, Patharigang, Nalugang, Nalibari, Hingari, Paruwagang, Tinokhal, Barkaligang and Kholapar etc. Karimganj town, the district headquarter, had also a small Bishnupriya Manipuri population. Pipala, Rangamati, Damchera, Uzan, Bali Pipala, Ishabeel and Nurkha falls under Rangamati sub-area.

Guwahti, the State capital of Assam, has a number of Bishnupriya Manipuri population much more than the Meiteis. They are residing at Maligaon, Sudarshanpur,

Tetelia, Kalapahar, Hengrabari, Kahilipara, Basistha, Chaliha Nagar, Jyotinagar, Khanapara, Borbari, Dakshmin Gaon, Kenduguri, Shalbari, Noonmati, Narengi, Tarun nagar, Shaktigarh, Rupnagar, Azara, Pandu, Mathuranagar, Motoria, Choymal, Rajgarh Road, Christianbasti, Ganeshguri, Jatia, Nayanpur, South Sharaniya, West Sharaniya, Katilakuchi, Bakrapara and other places.

Haflong town and its adjacent places of N.C.Hills district of Assam has a considerable Bishnupriya Manipuri population there. In Nowgaon district a place named Laupani and in Sunitpur district a village called Majbat (Chatribari) has also a small Bishnupriya Manipuri population there. Earlier, this Majbat was a Muslim village. During the partition of the Indian union in 1947 the Muslims opted to leave India for Pakistan and they finally chosed East Pakistan. An exchange was made in which the Bishnupriya Manipuri population of the village of Paruwa located in the East Pakistani came fly over to Majbat in place of the Muslims. It was in 1947-1948.

In Tripura, the Bishnupriya Manipuri population localities may be divided into Dharmanagar sub-area, Kailasahar sub-area, Kamalpur sub-area and West Tripura sub-area.

Dharmanagar sub-area consists with Bhagyapur, Ragana, West Ragana, Huruwa, North-East Huruwa, East Huruwa, South Huruwa, Chandrapur, Shanichera, Bhumihin Patty, Rajbari, Kherengjuri, Joynagar, Nadiyapur, Deuchera, Ramnagar, Panisagar, Sundibasa, Narendranagar, Radhakishorepur and Bamunia.

Kailasahar sub-area Bishnupriya Manipuri villages are Nidevi, Assambasti, Radhanagar, Krishnagar (Gandhari tilla), Krishnanagar (Jhanjhargang), Sripur, Kailasahar town, Paitur Bazar (Padmar-Par), Tilakpur, Guldarpur, North Guldarpur, Choudhurypara, Kirtantali, Bidyanagar, Ishabpur, Mashawli (Tilla), Rajnagar, Banorgang, Kanchanbari, West Kanchanbari, North-East Kanchanbari, Manu, Betchara, East Betchara, Natun Bazar, Kanchanchara, Nepaltilla(Bazar), Indranagar, Bhumihin Coloney, Tinghari (Kathalchara), East Kawlikura, West Kawlikura, Bhati Jalai, Uzan Jalai, Jalai, Bilaspur, Pechardahar, Mohanpur, East Fultali, West Fultali, Devipur, Dhanbilash, Jarailtali, Dalgoan and Guldarpur Nayapara.

Kamalpur sub-area Bishnupriya Manipuri populated villages are Abhanga, Bar Lutma, Devichara, East Devichara, Chankap, Bhumihin, Halhali (Halahali), Lutma Colony, Jamthum, Tilagaon, Mohanpur, Rupaspur, Guwalmara and Ganganagar.

West Tripura sub-area Bishnupriya Manipuri villages are Khas Kalyanpur, Kuwai, Kalkalia, Agartala including Radhanagar, Abhynagar, Dhaleswar, Banamalipur, Barduwali, Kasba Colony, Gopinagar and Rangapaniya.

Meghalaya also has Bishnupriya Manipuri population living scatteredly in the State. The localities are Forest Colony, Pynthorumkhra, Mulki, Dhanksheti, Vishnupur, Laitumkhra, Umpling, Oakland, Police Bazar, Alu Gudam, Nongthymai, Assam Rifle, Happy Valley, Tura, Langol, Gorampani, Nongpoh, Dawki, Cherapunjee,

Mawsynram, Ishamati, Kailarghat, Bhulaganj, Khleriat, Jowai and Laltrhymbai.

Bishnupriya Manipuris also have their settlement in Bangladesh and Burma and other overseas countries. And, among the foreign countries Bangladesh has the major Bishnupriya Manipuri population with the language and culture intact. The localities are Sripur, Madhavpur, Tilakpur (Nagar), Kalaraibil, Bhanubil(Banughas), Guramara, Charapathari, Baghbari, Baligaon, Teteigaon, Mahung, Hiramati, Bendaria, Ghanashyampur, Chunarughat, Baram, Barogaon, Farapunjee, Majergaon, Baluchar, Lakhat, Rajbari, Machimpur(Sylhet city), Lamabazar, North Tilakpur or Alipur, Guler Haour, Shimutala, Bamangaon, Gobindabari, Bhandari, Shukkur, Ulla-gaon, Chaygari, Kalibari, Chaigaon, Fultali, East Tilakpur (Paligo), Digalbhag etc. Besides, there are a considerable number of the Bishnupriya Manipuris living scatteredly in the local headquarter towns like Kamalganj, Khuwaighat; Rangamati of the Chittagoan Hill Tracts and also at Tezgaon, Manipuri-para of Dacca, the capital city of Bangladesh.

In Burma, Thangdut, Mawlaik, Kalewa and Bunmuk etc. are supposed to be the Bishnupriya Manipuri localities. In the United States of America, Canada, Germany and Austria, there are very few Bishnupriya Manipuris recently settled there for earning a living there.

Indo-Mongoloid elements : There are, however, a few Bishnupriya Manipuris who are physically more or less akin to that of the Mongolians. It is evident by a number of sources that China supplied some earlier racial elements that attributed to the development of the Indo-Chinese

culture in Assam. On strength, Pelliot has described two routes from Burma through Manipur and P.C.Bagchi points out that one of the routes from Patliputra goes through Manipur upto the Chindwin in Burma. The Accounts of Shung Shu (420-479 A.D) recorded the Chineses subduation of Manipur valley, and also the establishment of their suzerainty over Kapily valley which is to be located in modern Nowgaon.

In the writings of Dr. Padma Gogoi (The Tai and the Tai Kingdom, p.39, 40), it is referred to a Chinese work of the 16th century A.D. called A History of the Southern Princes[7] (M. Carthew, The History of the Thai in the Yun-nan in J.S.S., pp.1.,6-7) written by Yang-Tsai of Chen-Tu-fu in the province of Sze-Chuan which traces the descent of Prince Chiulung from King Ashoka of Magadha (264-228 B.C.). This legend of Ashoka showing relationship between the ruling dynasties of Yunnan and Magadha. Early cultural relations between India and the Far-Eastern countries are well-known. It was maintained mostly by the Buddhist missionaries. Pelliot argues that Nan-Chao[8] received Buddhist influences from India via the P'iao of Burma (Deux Itineraries, pp.154-183). The routes lay through Eastern Bengal, Manipur and Arakan and probably it was by this route that the Sakya Prince Abhi Raja in 923 B.C. and Dhvaja Raja in 523 B.C. (or 519 B.C.) reached Burma. There is, however, no mention of any journey by sea at early period (GUBSS, 1.L, p.217-218). The northern part of the Kubo valley which was on the direct route from Manipur to Burma which is still called Mauriya or Mauria or Mure or Moore or Morie said to be the name of the tribe to which King Ashoka belong (Phayre, History of Burma, p.6,7,15). Dr.

Padma Gogoi refers that in the northern part of the Kubo-valley the Tai people were living there from before the sixth century A.D. It is recorded in Francis Buchanan's investigative article : A Comparative Vocabulary of some of the languages spoken in the Burma Empire, in Asiatic Researches (Vol. V, 4th. Ed. 1807, p.228), that the Tailong or the great Tai people were called Maitay Kabao (Kabo) by the people of Cussay (Manipur).

Referring to the Chinese or Mongolian racial elements in Manipur valley, Arther Pelliot stated that the Chinese invaded Manipur in about 700 A.D. The Chinese called the people of the valley as Khalachas, i.e. the son of the wide lake (Loktak) and described them as highly civilised. Interestingly, the Meiteis of the Mongolian stock and the latecomer to Manipur used to call the Bishnupriya Manipuri as Khalachaya. The view of R.M.Nath is that the Kala-Chais were the first ruling race in possession of the Manipur valley. E.T.Dalton held that by degrees the Meiteis became more powerful in Manipur. It encouraged them to introduce matrimonial relations forceibly with the indigenous people undoubtedly with the Bishnupriya Manipuris, and it now merged into totally a new origin, i.e. the Indo-Mongoloid culture.

Rajput or Rajasthani elements : After a thorough survey and close observation on the history of the Bishnupriya Manipuris, it is found that there are certain Rajput or Rajasthani racial elements present among them. They are also most probably related to the Imperial Guptas of Central India. Their appearances, physical structure and habits etc. more or less has some assimilities with this people.

References are found that some of the Princes from Rajputna of the Rajvamsa Kahanorl and Mareura or Mandiya or Mauriya Vamsa Mahirangas settled in Manipur in the early period. It is reasonable to think that Rajasthan had a friendly relation with Hastinapur. The very Bishnupriya Manipuri dynasties known as the Kshumal and the Moirango lokei are probably derived form the Rajvamsa Kahanorl and the Mahirangas of Mauriya Vamsa.

It may be noted here that a special dress and even the day-to-day utensils used by this community bore the Rajasthani elements. The polei or dancing dress used by the Bishnupriya Manipuri maiden in the Broja Gopi Rasleela have an affinity with the gagaras of Rajasthan. The head dress or koyet, i.e. turban occasionally used by the aged male personnel are similar with the Rajasthani and other Hindustani people. There are no such evidences that the South-East Asian people, particularly, the Mongoloid group of people, have the practice of putting head dress or koyet. Moreover, the Bishnupriya Manipuri women wear a kind of swal commonly known as jaipuri dressed on the aangaluri or tolofuti, besides the blouses bedecked with chumkies.

The day-to-day utensils used in the community are jaipuri kuphang or metallic flat dish, jaipuri kheri or bowl or cup, jaipuri khuchei or water glass and jaipuri senapul or pitcher or water jar etc.

Relations with the Imperial Gupta's : The Allahabad Pillar Prasasti of Samudra Gupta (c.340 or 335-380 A.D.) composed by Harisena, the court poet , mentioned that the Arjunayanas who lived in the Bharatpore State of

Rajputna claimed themselves the descent of Arjuna, the third Pandava of the Mahabharata. The Allahabad Pillar Prasasti furthermore refers to the King Samudra Gupta who subdued five frontier kingdoms or Pratyanta Rastras, outer Utter Pradesh, Central India and Bengal. These frontier States were Samatata or South-East-Bengal, Deveka or parts of Assam and Kamrupa or Upper Assam in the East.

Now, it would be reasonable to assume that this Arjunayanas of Bharatpore might have a common relation with the Bishnupriya Manipuris of Manipur. Both the ethnic groups traced their ancestry with Arjuna, the third Pandava. It would also be possible that this Arjunayanas of Bharatpore might have undertook the expeditions with the Imperial Guptas over Samatata, Devaka and Kamrupa and in course of time they intermingled with the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Scholars have viewed that parts of the Manipur valley was either included with Devaka or Upper Assam during the rule of the Imperial Guptas.

Relations with the Ahoms : During the medieval period, Manipur maintained friendly relations with its neighbours, particularly with the mighty Ahoms, tie-up them with matrimonial relations. Princess were exchanged with rich presentations to each other's royal courts. It cemented their friendship politically and culturally to a great extent. Consequently, new ideologies were also transmitted in between them.

Manipuri King Chalumba (1544-1566 A.D.) married a Princess of Kamrupa and Muangba (1561-1579 A.D.) entered into a matrimonial alliances with Burma,

Tipperah and Assam. These unions had a definite cultural effect on Manipur and the Vishnu-cult got a further impetus (R.M.Nath, The Background of Assamese Culture, p.90). In 1537, the Koch King Siva Singha sent envoys to the Raja of Manipur and presents were exchanged (Sir Edward Gait, History of Assam, p. 96-97). The Ahom King of the period was Suhungmung or the Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539 A.D.). Suklenmung succeeded to the Ahom throne in 1539 and ruled until 1552. The period between Suhungmung and Suklenmung was important from religious point of view. Apart form the growing influnce of the Brahmans in the Ahom kingdom, it witnessed the spreed of the Vaishnava reformation promulgated by Srimanta Shankar Dev. The Assamese inscription engraved in many idols placed in the royal temple of Manipur located at Imphal and the Dimapur Stone testify the cultural affinities between the States.

There is a popular legend prevailed in Manipur that with the help of the Ahom King Hso-Rem-Hpa alias Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769), King Bhagya Chandra Singha alias Joy Singha won back his lost kingdom Manipur thwarting the ill designs of his wicked uncle Khelei Nungang Techeiba and the Burmese intruders.

The Ahom Buranjis refers that in 1758, Alompra(1752-1760), the founder of the last Burmese dynasty Alaungpaya of the Konboungset line invaded Manipur and other neighbouring countries. He defeated the Manipuris near Palel and captured the capital. But, Alompara had returned to Ava after thirteen days of his Manipur occupation due to the Paguan revolt in his country.

The Pangan

The Pangans are the Meitei Muslims. They are also called as the Khai Pangal or Mithai Pangal. They occupy an important place among the Meitei population constituting some 7% strength. Briefing the story of Pangans, Prof. Muhammad Ali Jehnab Khan states that "Sanangbha the rebel younger brother of King Khagenbha alias Pamheibha, attacked Manipur from outside with the help of the Mughal contingent stationed at Sylhet under Sultan Suja, son of Shahjahan, the great Mughal Emperor of Delhi, who fled away to Arakan, defeated by Aurangzeb. In the battle that followed, probably at Baskandi on the borders of Cachar and Manipur, Sanangbha was defeated and most of the Mughal soldiers were taken captives to Manipur. But, the King pardoned, allowed them to settle there and marry Meitei women. Pamheibha alias Khagenbha, the King of Manipur having the Naga origin received the title of Garib Nawaz conferred on him by the Pangans, i.e. the Meitei Muslims or Nuwa Banghals for the kind treatment they received from him.

On the contrary, in the writings of R. M. Nath it is stated that "Mughal Emperor sent three ambassadors to Manipur in 1662 A. D. and the King of Manipur also reciprocated. Thus gradually Manipur became connected the more with India then with Burma. This gave an impetus supported by royal favours to uncheck immigration of job seekers and fortune hunters to Manipur from Bengal and united provinces.

R. M. Nath further stated that Gopal Singha ascended the throne of Manipur in 1709 A.D. at the age of 20, and assumed the surname Garib Nawaz, a honorific epithet given to him by the Mughal Emperor of Delhi,

probably Bahadur Shah who ruled for only four years (17C7-1712). King Gopal Singha had a tradition of a Naga lineage, being the son of a Naga concubine of his father, or being brought up in the house of a Naga Chief along with his banished mother.

Brown mentioned that "Mohammedan population are almost entirely the immigrant Bengalis chiefly from the districts of Sylhet and Cachar. They are a mixed population. They chiefly followed the trades of gardening, carpentry and pottery. They also served as sepoys."

These people are mostly Sunni and follow Islamism. They have mosques in their villages. They are very orthodox in their religious prescriptions and rituals. They perform Namaz daily. Idd remains their major annual festival of all importance, but they don't celebrate Muharam. Jonstone refers that "formerly they had to prostrate themselves before the King like other subjects. After they have made a representation that this was against their religion, King Chandra Kirti Sinha (1884-1886) excused them from performing that and allowed them to offer Salam (salute) instead."

The male population of Pangal used the word Mohammed (Md.) in prefix to their name and the women choose to use Bibi as their surname. The Maulavi conducts their marriages and circumcision etc.

The Pangals have now-a-days completely forgotten their original languages, probably vulgar Bengali or Urdu or Hindustani and now speak Meitei instead. And, although they are Moghlai Mussalman they practise lineage exogamy, they however do not readily admit it openly. They are also known as Moghlai, but the educated group cautiously call themselves Mussalman.

The Nepali and others

In Manipur there are a considerable number of Nepali, Bengali, South Indian and North Indian people are living scatteredly there. ❑

Notes :

1. *Meitei* stands for *me*=man + *thai*=of or form Thailand, i.e. man/men coming form Thailand and its offsprings.
2. *Khai* stands for *Thai* or tribe meaning, the very tribe coming form Thailand.The
   Chakmas also called the Meiteis *Khai*
3. *Kalisa* - Chinese word meaning the sons of the great lake, i.e. Loktak of Manipur.
4. *Akoksa* - the head-hunter or the head-eater.
5. *Mayang Imphal* stand either for the high landers or the worriors in large population or a holy place settled by the worrior people or a cold place inhabted by the worrior people.
6. The six ethnic groups refer to Meitei, Loi, Yaithibi, Bishnupriya, Brahmin and Pangan. The term Ethnic Group, as used by McKim Marriott (1960:2) means for conveniance below to include both castes and tribes - is a hereditary group within a society or constituting a society, which is defined by its members and by others as a seperate people, society biolgically, and culturally; it need not be distinguishable in object fact by any unique complex of cultural or biological traits.
7. This work was collected at Tali-fu in Yunnan by an English missionary named G.W. Clark and translated it into English by him with the assistance of a local Chinese scholar. The manuscript was written in A.D. 1537 by Yang-Tsai of Chen-t'u-fu in Sze-Chyan and reedited by Hu-yu of Wuchangfu in Hu-peh in 1706. Clark published the English translation of the manuscript in a small book printed at the Shanghai Mercury Press in 1894 in a very limited number of copies for distribution among his friends.
8. *Nan-Chao* was a small principalities of Yunnan founded by one Prince Chiulung.

CHAPTER - III

Tribal dances of Manipur

The dance patterns in Manipur must have a link with the Gandharva Culture - which is mythologically believed to excel over all other dance forms. There shall be no reason against the fact that the elements of the subdued, slow, rhythmic movements are present almost in all the tribal dances.

Ethnically, the hill tribes of Manipur, though divided into a number of clans and sections, may be grouped under the two main divisions - Naga and Kuki. Furthermore, these people supply a considerable number of population in the State. There are about twenty-nine tribes in Manipur. They are - Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gante, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha-Naga, Koireng, Koirao, Kam, Lamgang, Any-Mizo (Lusei), Maram, Maring, Meo, Mongsang, Mayon, Paite, Saltle, Tangkhul, Puram, Ralte, Sema, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zaou.

Apparently, the very habits, fooding and housing pattern are by and large same to each other among the tribes. They prefer Jhum cultivation. As per 1971 census reports of the Govt. of India, the tribes of Manipur constitute more than 60% of the total population of the East, West and Tamenglang district respectively. The tribes of Manipur all can speak Meitei language, but they like to identify themselves more with their traditional kinsmen of

Nagaland and Mizoram than with their next-door neighbours, i.e. the Meiteis in the valley. They are also frustrated with Meitei nationalism aiming at the assimilation of these tribes to a broaden Meitei or Manipuri identity remaining as a part there of and parcel.

These people have their distinctive languages and cultural heritage of their own. Their dances are also artistic. The noted tribal dances of Manipur are Tangkhul Naga dance, Mao dance, Mizo Bamboo dance, Tarao war dance, Kabui war dance, Tangkhul Naga Hunting dance, Surung dance and Rengmai Naga dance etc.

Kabui Naga dance

The Kabui's inhabiting the western hill ranges of Manipur have a nice tradition of music and dance. In their dances, a series of movements accompanied by music are executed with much artistry. The movements are abstract and assume geometrical pattern and are usually performed in circles with boys holding daos or swords and wear inexhaustible dresses, and girls dancing in their best possible costumes.

Tankhul Naga dance

The Tankhul Naga occupancy area of the eastern zone of Manipur, extends from Jengnoupal right up to Somra Tract, now in Burma or Myanmar in the north. They have five important festivals in a year dealing with sowing and harvesting . The boys and girls sing and dance with spears and mostly without percussion instruments, in slow subdued movements.

Thadou Kuki dance

The Thadou Kuki is one of the major tribes inhabiting the southern hill ranges of Manipur. This tribe has got beautiful dance organs, slightly resembling bar pipe called gosem made of group and seven bamboo reeds of different lengths. Bamboo dance of this tribe, like that of the Bamboo dance of the Mizo's is one of their most favourite dance.

Mao Maram dance

The Mao Nagas of Manipur inhabit the northern ranges of the State and contribute to the richness and variety of the tribal culture of Manipur. The Mao Nagas dance with spears beautiful head dresses and exquisite costumes in their various festivals. The movements are often slow and graceful with rhythmic foot steps. Percussion instruments are not used in this type of dance.

Tarao dance

Among the 29 scheduled tribes of Manipur, the Taraos constitute a minority. Their customs are very simple but artistic. The males often dance and display considerable skill in their movements.

Mizo dance

The Mizo tribes who migrated to Manipur from Lusai Hills now called Mizoram, contribute a lot to the richness and beauty of the tribal culture of Manipur. The Mizo's display considerable skill in their foot steps and movements which are best illustrated in what is known as

the Bamboo dance. It is fascinating to watch the young female stepping, jumping and dancing with the intricate movements of the bamboo pieces. In Tripura this people are known as the Lushai.

Kut or Folk-festival : In Mizo language Kut means folk-festival. The Mizos are fond of various folk-festivals. At the end of February after the preparation of land for Jhum cultivation and before the spraying of seeds they observe Kut or folk-festivals. Besides paying homage to their God Pathiyan the Mizos, through this festival pray to their God to make their land green with crops. The festivals are observed with great pomp and gaiety. On the day of the festival, all the villagers, being attired in their traditional dresses, get-together in the places of the festival. The festival begins after the headman addresses the masses. Incidentally, the folk-festivals of the Mizos which are related to cultivation are - Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut and Pawal Kut etc.

Chapchar Kut is observed any day in the month of March soon after the preparation of land for Jhum cultivation, and the Mim Kut is observed amidst songs and dances during the months of August-September. In this festival mass feast is arranged in which country liquor made from rice is served. Mim kut is also called as Moiji festival and is dedicated to the departed souls of the Mizos. Pawal festival takes place in the months of December-January after harvesting. This Pawal Kut is regarded as the principal festival by the Mizos. In this festival the Mizos entertain through songs and dances. But now-a-days due

to the influences of the western culture these traditional festivals are losing their significance in Mizoram.

Folk dance : The folk-dances of the Mizos are based on Shaili, a dance style prevailing in the hill areas of Mizoram. Their folk-dances like - Cheraw dance, Chai-lam, Khual-lam, Rallu-lam, Solakia, Sarlamkai dance, Tlang-lam, Chawnglaizawn dance, Zangla-lam dance etc. bear the traditional and cultural heritage of the simple living Mizo people.

Cheraw dance : This dance is called as Bamboo dance in English. In this dance Mizo youths of both the sexes dance with long bamboos in harmony with a folk-song in Loitas Bangi (a particular action of dance). According to Mizo myths Cheraw dance is meant for the eternal peace of a mother who breathed her last at the time of giving birth to a baby. This is the dance of self consciousness.

Khaul-lam : In Mizo, Khual means guest and lam means folk-dance. The name of the dances says that it is meant for the entertaimment of guests. This folk-dance is presented in harmony with Sai-Latha folk-songs organised in the evening after the days work.

Chai-lam : This is one of the famous folk-dances of Mizos. Both men and women stand in a circular way and present the dance moving to and fro in harmony with a folk-chorus. Music, specially of instrument made of the horn

of Mithun are associated with this dance. According to Mizo myths if a Chai-lam begins nobody can predict when it will conclude.

Rallu-lam : This is the dance of bravery. The Mukhial arranges this dances as a mark to welcome when the winners who take part in any hunting mission returns home. Like Rallu-lam, the Solakia folk-dances of Maras and Pois were also regarded as the dance of bravery. The Maras and the Pois are the most expert dancers among the Mizos. There are five rhythms (tal) in Solakia dance. Sarlamkai is another bravery dance of the Mizos.

Chawnglaizawn : This is the folk-dance of the Pawis. This dance is arranged to welcome the hunters when they return home after successful completion of their hunting mission. In this dance Pawi boys and girls stand in queue and dance in harmony with the music.

Zangtalam : Zangta-lam, in which both men and woman take part, is the folk-dance of the Paites. This dance is directed by a drummer. The dance is associated with a song which is sung about the stories of those who participate in the dance.

Tlang - lam : This dance, being participated both by males and females, is presented with the help of the folk-song; Puma-Zai. This dance earns reputation even outside Mizoram. ❑

CHAPTER - IV

Aryan influences in Manipur

The geographical location of the Manipur valley gives it a partial isolation from the mainland for a long period in the past. It was only after the advent of the Aryans in the valley ages ago, it adopted open door policy to all and soon it became a part and parcel of the Indian panorama. It is stated that the indigenous people of the valley were the Gandharva's mentioned in the Ramayana and Mahabharata and other secular works. In the pre-Christian era, a bulk of the Indo-Aryan people from the north-west of India had entered into the Manipur valley. Now, it assembled in her the major folks of the east and the west.

Reasonably, the Bishnupriya Manipuris consider themselves to be the Aryans of genuine descent, who, according to their opinion, came to the Manipur valley during the reign of Babhrubahana, the legendary King of Manipur and played a vital role in the formation of the existing professional caste and races of Manipur. The Meitei, on the other hand, differentiate themselves as the Mongoloid group of people.

The term Aryan means civilized people. In about 2000 B.C., a migrative horde of this people, who perhaps originally inhabited in the Caspean Sea region, began to move to different parts of Europe and Asia. These people

who lived in tribes, were called Indo-European speaking people as they spoke a language belonging to the Indo-European family of languages, like Sanskrit, Latin, Greek etc. A branch of these people later on came to be known as the Indo-Aryan to distinguish themselves from others who spoke various Aryan languages, such as Sanskrit, and went to western Asia and Europe.

Scholars like P. Maiti and R. K. Kanchan agrees that the Aryans when settled in various parts of North India, were hostile to the indigenous people whom they referred to as Dasa's and Dasyu's. The Aryans worshipped the forces of nature,- the Gods of rain and thunder (Indra, Soralel), wind (Varuna, Bouraja) and sun (Surjya, Beliraja) and the others. These Gods showered rain, so the people believed, ripened their crops and helped to defeat enemies. Hymns in praise of these Gods are found in the Rigveda. On the contrary, the Dasas and Dasyus did not worship the same Gods and Goddesses as the Aryans and spoke a language which was different from the Vedic Sanskrit. In the later period, the Aryans mixed-up with the native people through matrimonial relations, and so on. Still, they maintained their separate superior identity from the indigenous people whom they considered lower caste. Eventually, the word Arya came to refer to a respected aged person, in the Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

The Aryans were divided amongst themselves into four groups namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. The most powerful people were King's and worrior's who were called Kshatriya's. Equally important were the priest or Brahmin (Bamun), and then came the

craftsmen and cultivators or Vaishyas. Sudras were the low caste people in the society. In the Bishnupriya Manipuri social institution, only the Kshatriyas and Brahmins are found.

The origin of the Aryans

Scholars have their different view points in regard the Aryans. Some advocate that the Aryans were indigenous people of India, while to the others, these people came to India from outside. Provatansu Maiti holds that " The parent Aryans language from which modern languages like Sanskrit, Parsian, Latin, Greek, Celtic, Gothic have developed is known under the name Indo-European or Indo-Germatic. Secondly, the term Aryan is purely a linguistic conception and cannot be correctly applied to race" (Iran in the Ancient East, 1941, p. 190).

In 1786, Sir William Jones pointed out in his address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal that the similarities among the languages like Sanskrit, Parsian, Greek, Roman etc. can be accounted by the fact that they originated from the same parent language called the Indo-European. Further researches by the other eminent scholars have shown that the languages belonging to the Indo-European family are found to extend from the Gangetic valley of India to the Atlantic basin in Europe. This has led to the complicated question as to the actual locality where the people speaking original Indo-European language lived and wherefrom they migrated to these areas.

Some scholars hold the theory that India was the original home of the Aryans, and they migrated to other

areas of the world from that country. The famous historian Pargiter in his work : Dynasties of the Kali-Age has said that the Aryans migrated form India itself and settled in different lands. M.M.Gaunanath Jha, on the other hand, has suggested that the Aryans originally lived in Brahmarshi Desha of India, while D.S.Trivedi has stated Multan as the original home place to the Aryans. L.D. Kalla has advocated the theory that Kashmir and the Himalayan region was the original home of the Aryans. Contrary to it, there are other definite literary evidences in the great Vedas that the Aryans regard Sapta-Sindhu as their original home. The Sapta-Sindhu or seven rivers mentioned in the Rigveda are : the Ganges, the Yamuna, the Saraswati, the Shatadru, the Marudvridha, the Arjikiaya and the Indus or the Sindhu.

According to Prof. Hirt, the Aryans migrated from Lithuania to Caucasus. From the Caucasian land they entered Iran. From Iran they migrated to the Punjab. Eduard Meyer has rejected the theory of Prof. Hirt. He hold that the Aryans did not come to India from West Asia or Iran; they originally lived in a place between India and Iran. They spread eastward and westward form this place simultaneously.

With the expansion of the Aryan settlement, in the eastern and southern parts of India, the small tribal States of the Rigvedic period were gradually replaced by larger territorial units. With this transformation, many of the Rigvedic tribes lost their importance. The new Aryan tribes like the Kuru's and Panchali's etc. first rose into prominence. And, by the 6th century B.C., among the sixteen Mahajanpada's of the time, the region of Southern

Bihar become very important and soon Magadha rose to a position of pre-emience to build a vast empire including North-East. References are also found that through Manipur valley the Indian culture and civilisation reached up to the Far-East countries and established colonies there. The imperial Guptas made their penetration there contributing a lot to the cultural splendour of the regions.

A number of scholars advocate the theory of European origin of the Aryans on the basis of philosophical data. The flora and fauna known to the early Aryans points out their original home in Europe. It is to be mentioned here that the celebral sound of Sanskrit reveal an admixture of Indo-European languages of the Aryans. The Sanskrit word Pitre, and Matre are essentially the same as Pater and Meter in Latin, Pater and Meter in Greek, Father and Mother in English and Vater and Mutter in German. In the Bishnupriya Manipuri language structure, which is claimed to be the Indo-Aryan group of family, exists a number of Indo-Europoan wordings. Some examples have been quoted here for reference : behaviour>bever, chop>chopp, demon>demos, easy> ijju, ether>ithei, full>pullap, fly>f'or>fordani, gate> gangta>ganta, genital>gengwitol, gossip> gopchari> gop, hymen>he-man>heman, jerk>jakoron, jolt> joltong, photo>fotok, ram>ramgo, sentri>santiri, sanctity> seng> sanc, sanctuary>seng-pham, stem> khem> dem, talk> tatorani>tek-tekani>tok-tokani, xanthippe> hinchapi, yelp>elou-palou etc.

C.L. Wrenn in his book : The English Language, (p.9-15) narrating the nature and structure of the Indo-European family of languages states, " If one compares

a number of languages, it probably soon appears that some of them have some sort of relationship to one another while others may seen quite isolated. If then we are able to trace a group of these apparently related forms in several languages to a common ancestor by means of older writings, it may sometimes become almost certain that these forms must be branches, as it were from a common root. By going further back, we may sometimes be able to compare a number of early forms each of which is the ancestor of later developments in the different languages, so as to establish a strong probability that they in their turn must all be descended from a common pre-historic original.

This supposed origin will be much older than the earliest written languages, so that it can never be varified with absolute certanity, but must remain only a strongly supported hypothesis. But if other qualities in the languages we are comparing corroborate the relationship and common ancestry which are arrived at by the above method, we may find ourselves well on the way to being able to construct a genealogy of our languages- in other words to classify them into families. For example, if we take the words for is, in some of the better known European, and Asiatic languages, we may reconstruct with fair probability the ancestral pre-historic word from which all must be descended : and this relationship will be found to be confirmed by other evidence. Latin est, Greek esti, Russian est, jest, German ist, Italian e', etc.

Now, by studying the earliest forms and the later history of each of these languages, we can be pretty sure that the ancestral form from which all descend, was esti.

We know, for instance, that in Sanskrit an original *e* - sound became a, and that the Italian pronunciation reduced the speculative specialist in the earlier Latin est to a form indicated by the modern spelling e'. Thus, such forms as esti should always be written with an asterisk to remind all concerned that they are only probable reconstructions of ancestral or primitive forms as distinct from those attested by writing. Though such starred forms are necessary to the early history of languages and in classification, for the student who is primarily only dealing with English, it is clear that the fewer of them he uses, the better.

English belongs, in all its stages, to the Indo-European family of languages, formerly called Indo-Germanic and still earlier Aryan. Indo-European is the name given to the set of linguistic forms from which nearly all European languages as well as those of Persia and a very large part of India can be shown to have descended. We do not know that all these prehistoric forms co-existed or that they can properly be said to have been collectively an actual language; for languages and parts of languages change at differing speeds. Nor would it be right to assume that there was ever a race of people who spoke this Indo-European as their language. Race, culture and language need not always correspond or be co-extensive, as many be seen in modern Switzerland.

Indo-European is used because it merely suggests that the languages it comprises cover most of Europe and India, or that Europe and India mark the length of its confines. The predominance and pioneering position of the German philosophist of the nineteenth century

sufficiently accounts for the earlier term Indo-Germanic. Aryan was the name (from the Sanskrit Aryan- noble) which the fair-skinned bringers of the Hindu civilization to India from the north gave themselves to distinguish them from the darker and less cultured people whom they largely conquered, and the belief among the predecessors of the more scientific German philologists that Sanskrit, with its remarkably full inflexions was the ancestor of all the then studied European and Asiatic languages may explain the use of the term Aryan for what we now call Indo-European.

Beginning at some period several thousand years B.C., this Indo-European starting perhaps at a point in Southern Europe near the Asian border, spread itself both east and west. As it spread, with the changing needs of its speakers for different homes, it mixed with many non-Indo-European tongues and was modified by them variously at different stages. As speakers spread farther and farther from the starting point, their kinds of Indo-European developed more and more qualities which made them different from their ancestor. Thus very broadly, may be described the gradual growth through successive stages of which everged the modern languages of Europe, Persia and India as we know them.

There are eight main groups of Indo-European languages, all traceable back to the Indo-European primitive ancestor. These are divided into roughly an Eastern and a Western set of groups.

The Eastern set comprises four groups of languages, which have in common certain basic changes from the original system, such as a general shift in the

pronunciation of the so called guttural consonants g and k to a palatal position. Thus, for instance, the Indo-European assumed primitive form for the numeral 100 is kmtom; but whereas languages of the Western set of groups such as Latin (centum) retain the original k- sound, Sanskrit has changed the k to and sh- sound [S] (satam) and Russian has the word as sto. For this reason, the Western languages are commonly referred to as Centum-languages and he Eastern - after the old Persian or Iranian form of the word - as Satem languages.

The four Eastern groups are Balto-Slavic - including all the Slavonic tongues, ancient and modern and the related languages of Baltic countries such as Lithuania and Latvia; Indo-Iranian including the languages of old and new India of which Sanskrit is the type and of Iran-Persia; then Armenian ancient and modern with its various dialects and finally Albanian which is only spoken over a relatively small area but forms a separate groups by its nature none the less.

The Western group are Greek, ancient and modern with their many dialects, Latin and all its derivatives, Celtic which survives in ancient inscriptions and in the mediaeval and modern languages of Wales, Ireland, the Scottish Highlands and Brittany, and formerly existed in Cornwall and the Isle of Man, and finally the Germanic group, which comprises the languages of Germany, Scandinavia, Holland and the Flemish parts of Belgium as well as English, and includes these in some ancient and mediaeval forms also. It is only with this last, the Germanic group, that we are here concerned. But, what is it that

makes this Germanic, and therefore English, Indo-European?

Indo-European is but one of a number of families into which the world's languages may be divided, and it must be remembered, too, that there are still many languages, and even whole groups, that have not been examined scientifically or committed to writing yet, and hence cannot be fitted into any scheme of classification. Broadly speaking, it may be said that two outstanding characteristics indicate the Indo-Europeanness of a language; its structures and its vocabulary. Indo-European languages generally lend themselves in structure, at least if one knows something of their historical development, to that description of forms invented by the ancient Greeks and named by them Parts of Speech. A language may have inflexions fully retained relatively from the original Indo-European, like Russian, or it may have lost most of its distinctive word-endings like modern English; it may, as the grammarians say, be synthetic with full inflexions or analytic with few or none. But, if we can think of its forms fairly readily as nouns, verbs etc. that is to say under the traditional classical terms of Parts of Speech, it will probably be found to be Indo-European. Chinese, with its forms consisting not of Parts of Speech, but of what seen now to be merely monosyllabic roots, is therefore, not Indo-European again, even in Europe, there are what are called Finno-Ugrian or Urabian languages - Hungarian and Finnish for instance, which do not shew Parts of Speech, or even words in our ordinary sense always. Here a kind of phrase - complex takes the place

of a clause or group of words and all kinds of things can be said about an object by building up a single root with prefixes and suffixes. These languages are sometimes classed as agglutinative or incorporating. Many of the languages of Central Asia (the then U.S.S.R.) are of this kind. In the matter of vocabulary, secondly the Indo-European languages have so much in common, namely a shared nucleus of fundamental roots, that this common basis of vocabulary (often changed beyond recognition except by the linguistic specialist) may serve to distinguish them from all others. Thus, for instance most of the names of family relationships of elementary domestic materials and of familiar animals, if compared in their historical early forms and traced back to what must have their pre-written ancestors, can be seen to be shared by the Indo-European languages and not to be found in those forms except by borrowing outside those groups.

Germanic, then, is Indo-European in the sense that it uses the Parts of Speech, whether with full inflexions synthetically as in its ancient forms, or with reduced inflexions tending towards the analytic, as in modern Dutch or English, and because, secondly, it shares a fundamental nucleus of the vocabulary of the commonest things with other Indo-European tongues. There are others which perhaps should be applied but enough has been said to indicate broadly what is meant by describing English as Indo-European."

Aryan penetration into Manipur

Motivation of the Aryan or Hindu migration.

proceeding form all parts of India to Suvarnabhumi (Suvarna=jewelled+ Bhumi=land, i.e. the Jewelled land), coinsided with Manipur, the land of jewels (Mani=jewel+Pur=city), penetrated into the colonies and mixed up with the indigenous people through matrimonial relationship. This migrative hordes, now from Manipur, plunged themselves headlong into Burma after crossing the geographical borders. Some groups settled in Burma, some in Thailand and some others footed in modern Chinese province of Yunnan or Gandhara. It is however, generally found that the migrating races, while naming their settlements, did not forget their original motherland and lovingly cherish the memories of their land of origin in their literature and legends as well.

R. K. Kanchan in his work, Hindu Kingdoms of South-East Asia (p.83) recorded that in the earliest time about 1000 B.C., both the regions of Upper and Lower Burma were called Brahmadesha. In Arankan region of Burma, the traditional history tells us that just after the Mahabharata war, a horde of Indian warriors entered the region who overpowered the local rulers and set up their own kingdoms. One of the two leaders of Indian warriors was a Sannyasi. This Sannyasi may be identified with Babhrubahana, who has installed a Vishnu Shalgram Shila (Stone image of Lord Vishnu) at Vishnupur of Manipur. He was reputed for his devotion to Lord Vishnu for which he and his people were later on termed as Vishnupriya or Bishnupriya, i.e. the darling of Lord Vishnu. R.K.Kanchan further adds : " The ruling dynasty of Hastinapura, which had evidently migrated from India,

was much endeared to the people that the later called them Priya or dear. The word Priya in course of time, become the name of people and continued till 8th. century A.D. Chinese chronicles called the same by the name of Piao or Pyu who were the oldest inhabitants of organised Burma. According to Burmese annals the whole region of Upper Burma from Shri Khestra up to Pagan was named Brahmadesha. Pyus or Priyas were mostly born of Indian father and Burmese mother. Their society was saturated with Hindu culture. Pyu inscriptions so far discovered are all in Sanskrit."

E.A. Gait in his accounts, History of Assam (p.9), stated that "The Indian King Samudra who according to Farlong, was ruling in Upper Burma in 105 A.D." The Chinese chronicles written during the reign of Tsang dynasty of China (A.D. 618-907) have given some interesting details of the kingdom of Pyu dynasty of Burma. Inscriptions left by Pyus are in Sanskrit which attest their Indian origin, and the foundation of the kingdom of Priya (dear) or its corruption Pyu was laid by a Prince of Hastinapura. This Prince was supposed to be Babhrubahana.

Nature of migration

Reference may be given that the predecessors of the Bishnupriya Manipuris proceeded further towards the east from their mainland Hastinapur either spurred by the spirit of adventure and expedition or by the urge of necessity; they entered Manipur valley ages ago and extended their sway over to Burma in later date. The whole

of Upper Burma to the east of the hills bordering on Manipur was colonised by the Indian Aryans who established kingdom at Prome, Pagan, Tagaung and other places. This view has immense corroboration in the writing of G.E. Harvery (History of Burma, p. 310), that the remains of Tagaung in Upper Burma are of great antiquity rest largely on Fuhrer's statement in 1874 that he had found a stone slab dated 416 A.D. at Tangaung, with a Sanskrit inscription referring the foundation of Tangaung by the immigrant Prince of Hastinapur, i.e. Old Delhi. This immigrant Prince most probably had a friendly relation with the later successors of Babhrubahana, the King of Manipur, and were called to be the lineage of the Bishnupriya Manipuri.

Arther Pelliot states that the Chinese invaded Manipur in or about 700 A.D., and won a war. The Chinese inroads over the valley was authenticated in the writings of Hien-Tasng, the great Chinese traveller who has visited the court of Kumar Vaskar Varmana of Kamrupa in the 7th century A.D. The pilgrimage mentions that there were commercial and social-cultural relations between China and Kamrupa through Burma during the period. Referring to the boundary of ancient Kamrupa, most of the Puranas like Vishnu Purana indicating the kingdom as it extended upto the Karotoya river in the west, and included Manipur, Jaintiya, Cachar, some parts of Sylhet, Rongpur and portions of Bhutan and Nepal. It suggest that Manipur had its political as well as socio-cultural relations with Kamrupa and China, too, from earliest times. ❑

CHAPTER - V

The King and the Prince*

Once upon a time, there reigned a King who had three sons. His subjects one day came to him and said, "O incarnation of Justice, the kingdom is infested with thieves and robbers. Our property is not safe. We pray your majesty to catch these thieves and punish them". The King said to his sons, "My sons, I am old but you are all in the prime of manhood. How is it that my kingdom is full of thieves ? I look to you to catch these thieves".

The three Princes then made up their minds to guard all parts of the city every night. With this view, they set up a fort in the outskirts of the city where they kept their horses. In the early part of the night the eldest Prince mounted his horse and went through the whole city, but did not see a single thief. He came back to his station. About midnight, the second Prince mounted his horse and rode through every parts of the city, but he did not see a single thief, and so came back to the station. Some hours after midnight, the youngest Prince went the rounds, and when he came near the gate of his fathers' palace he

*This is one of the famous folk-tales collected by Sir G.A.Grierson in original Bishnupriya Manipuri language in Roman script with English translation. (Ref. The Linguistic Survey of India-1891, Vol.-V, Pt. I, Edn. 1903, P. 429-431).

saw a beautiful woman coming out of it. The Prince accosted her, and asked her who she was and where she was going at that time of night. She replied, "I am the King's Good Luck, the guardian deity of the palace. This night the King will be killed and hence I am no longer needed here, and am going away". The prince did not know what reply to make to this message but after a moment's reflection he said to the Goddess, "Suppose the king is not killed tonight, have you any objection to returning to the palace and staying there?"

"I have no objections," replied the Goddess. The Prince then begged the Goddess to go in again, and promised to do his best to prevent the King from being killed. She did so, and as she entered disappeared from his view.

The Prince went straight into the bedroom of his royal father, and found him lying there, plunged in deep sleep. His second and youngest wife, the stepmother of the Prince, was sleeping in another bed in the room, and a lamp was burning dimly. What was the Prince's astonishment when he suddenly saw a huge cobra gliding round and round the royal bed of gold on which his father was sleeping. He drew his sword, and with one stroke cut the serpent in two. He thus saved his father from the threatened death. ❑

CHAPTER - VI

The romance of Khamba-Thoibi*

In the days of Chingkhu Telheiba, King of Moirang, Chingkhu Akhuba was the Jubaraj. The King had no child, while Jubaraj Akhuba had a daughter Thoibi Laima by name. The contemporary King in Kshumal kingdom was Yoithonganai, who had three sons, Haoramba-hal, Haoram-yeima and Haoram-thol Louthiba.

One day, while the royal soothsayer Panji Thoiba, went for fishing in a lake along with his wife, Chaobi Nongnangma-chak, whereupon there grew a Heibung tree. As the soothsayer rested in the shade of the tree, he found a necklace of beads and picked it up. Honestly he went to the Kshumal King, who was by then old enough, and handed over the necklace. The King then set the necklace on the neck of his eldest son, Haoramba-hol and then again on the neck of the second son and finally on the youngest son Haoram-thol.

About the same time, the Luang King Punsiba built

*Over the ages, the tale of Thoibi, the Moirang Princess and Khamba, a Kshumal Prince of Manipur has been a common legendary folk tale among the Meitei and the Bishnupriya Manipuris, living in and outside Manipur. While the earnestness of the love between the two readily reminds one of the 'Laila-Maznu' sequence, a spiritual fervour is attributed to it whereby Khamba is recognized as the incarnate of Lord Siva and Thoibi, that of the Mother Goddess Durga, embodying the elements of Manipuri masterpiece, romantic elements in it. T.C. Hodson has his references about the story vividly.

up a new palace and invited all the Kings to the inauguration ceremony thereof and arranged a grand feast in honour of the Kings on the day when he was to physically take possession of the palace. The youngest of the Kshumal Prince being away from the palace, having gone to the villages around for sporting, the other two Princes dressed in the royal to attend the ceremony. Taking advantage of the youngest's absence, Haoramba-hal and Haoram-yeima entreated their mother for the necklace and the mother hearkened to their entreaty. Haoram-thol arrived home at the moment and was beyond himself in rage not to see the necklace and at once took his father's sword to revenge upon his brothers who took away the necklace. It was the eldest Haoramba-hal on whose neck he saw the necklace and so slew him. Afraid at that the middle brother Haoram-yeima fled to Moirang and married two women there, each of whom, bore for him a son. Parenkoiba by the elder wife and Thangloihaiba was the son of the younger wife. As time passed by Parenkoiba got married and got a son named Purenba. Purenba, on marriage got a daughter Khamnu, and a son Khamba. This so-called marriage had an interesting episode behind.

One day, when the Moirang King Chingkhu Telheiba went to the jungles for hunting someone set the reeds on fire and five tigers came out roaring from the jungles, at which all the Kings men fled away abandoning him. There was Purenba only ready to fight the tigers whom he killed with his spear.

The King was highly pleased and amazed at the bravery of the man and his enormous strength. He

honoured the man Purenba offering a high office in the Statc and presenting his queen as an award along with a huge dowry including nice clothing and jewellery for her. She lived with Purenba and gave birth two kids - Khamnu and Khamba by name. But it was her ill luck and she was widowed when Purenba died in a spell of evil spirit. Unable to bear the agony of her husband's death she embraced the pyre of her husband's cremation and died. Khamnu and Khamba turned orphans.

Before his death Purenba called for his friends, Nongthouba and Thonglen, and commanded his children under their care and Nongbal Chaoba betrothed his son Feiroijamba to Khamnu. As pledged Thonglen took charge of two children, who however could not reconcile themselves there and Thonglen allowed them to come to their father's place. There being none to help them, Khamnu had to manage her living by husking paddy for the village pecple and the village women gave the breast to Khamba who was quite a minor at the time. Then both Khamba and his sister, Khamnu grew young.

One day Khamnu went to the market at Moirang and coincidentally met the Princess Thoibi who happened to visit the same shop in the market. The sweet face of the maid Khamnu drew her attention. She approached her, asked a number of questions. She liked Khamnu and as a token of her love presented her with enough food and other articles including some jewellery ornaments. This developed an affinity. The Princess bade Khamnu to meet again and invited her to go to the Loktak for fishing.

The King came to know of her daughter's desire and ordered that no male members should be there in

the lake when the Princess will be fishing and sporting there in the company of Khamnu.

The next day, Khamnu told Khamba all about her going to the lake and asked him not to go there defying the King's order.

As he slept alone, he dreamt the Goddess Panthoibi came to him in the guise of Khamnu. He got confused at Khamnu commanding him to get the vegetables together. God Thangjing worked in his mind to believe that it was Khamnu indeed commanding him. He woke and set for his sister to the lake. There he found a boat and rowed it on, searching Khamnu. Suddenly a storm came and blew off Khamba's boat in the direction where Khamnu and the Princess were fishing. At once he stood near Thoibi. The Princess was initially annoyed at someone violating her father's orders, and asked Khamnu if she knew the youngman.

Khamnu fell into a dilemma and said she did not know the man. Hearing his sister Khamba got closed to her silently. Thoibi cast her full glance over the person of Khamba. She noted that the youngman was wearing the necklace she presented to Khamnu the previous day, besides noticing Khamnu wearing a cloth that could be the youngman's turban. She liked the youth's symmetrical body structure and the modest manners. Khamba, too, noticed the beauty of the Princess. They were infatuated towards each other. Khamnu could not but acknowledge him as her brother. At once the Princess got soft and gracious to Khamba. She offered him the sweetmeats meant for her and advise him to return home lest the King could know of his presence and punish him. Khamba

modestly obliged her.

On their way home back Thoibi asked Khamnu to show her house. So they went together to Khamnu's house. It was a dingy little house broken here and there. A red piece of cloth lie in the northern side known as the ukoklel. Khamba, ashamed at the condition of the house kept himself hidden in a corner behind a mat. Though such a poor house it was Thoibi appreciated it and wanted to know why the mat was hung there. Khamnu replied that it was the secluded portion for their racial God Kshumalpokpa, the ancestor of the Kshumal dynasty. Thoibi got full of reverence for the God and sought for Khamnu's permission to offer her prayers there. Allowed, she prayed to the God Kshumalpokpa to be graceful on her to allow her stay there and offer her worship to him daily. She made the prayer loud enough to make Khamba hear the same.

Khamba had no other way but to laugh at this which both the women heard.

The Princess sat on the varandah and said " Your God has spoken to me".

Khamba came out and sent his sister to the village to bring some fruits.

As Khamnu went out Thoibi bade her maid Senu to go to Khamba with her presents and the message. Senu did accordingly and said to Khamba, "My Lord! My lady has bade me give you these presents from her and convey her heart's desire to be your servant for life and unto you she will give herself and to none else, in the world".

Khamba accepted the gifts and the both pledge their immortal love before the family God and drunk the

water sanctified by dipping the gold ornaments. As Khamnu arrived the Princess called her in and asked Khamba to go to the people and show his power before the King's officers.

Khamba went out and joined a group of youths who were there practising wrestling. An elder person standing nearby saw the physical strength of Khamba and asked him join wrestling. Khamba did accordingly. He defeated all, even the country side champion. This gave him a full publicity as a strong man. The King's minister Nongthouba, saw Khamba and heard about his victory. The minister asked his name and then followed by his men he was ready to go to the King's court. But then curiously the minister called for the champion and asked his men to tell the details about the youngman.

"I have seen the man but I do not know his name, I only know it for certain that he is strong like a rock immovable and his strength defies all resistance like the flow of a river". The minister thereafter called for the youngman. Asked his name and his father's name too.

Khamba told his name but could not tell the name of his father as he was just a baby when his father died, and was brought up by his sister. He informed that she might know his father's name. The King's minister kept on staring at the youngman's face and gradually identified him with his deceased father Purenba, who was his friend. Sorry at the developments he said to Khamba - "It's true indeed that the elephants do not recognize their brother's, and the King's forget their sons. Your father died before his prime, as a tree dies when men strip off its barks."

The minister dropped the idea of going to the King's durbar and instead went home back lovingly taking the youngman with him. He introduced him to the women folk there and bade them bring good cloths for Khamba and offer him dainties. He knew it well that it was Khamnu's younger brother. He had betrothed his eldest son to marry Khamnu. He was beside himself with joy to reunite with the children of his friend. Eager to see Khamnu the soonest, he set for her with his men carrying a lot of presents for her including dresses and other apparels. As they reached they could not control their tears. They wept outside the house of Khamnu for a while, Khamnu hid herself in the female's chamber inside the house as she knew the minister, who was her would be father-in-law. Later she received the guests with honour.

The next morning, the minister took Khamba with him and presented him before the Yubaraj. Prior to this departure Khamnu gave her wisest advice to her brother "If anyone jealous, put a stick in the path, do not tread over it but overtake it, for they may harm you. Jostle not in the crowd for they may envy thee."

The minister narrated the identity of Khamba and his strength to the Yubaraj and thereafter took Khamba to the King.

Hearing everything from the minister the King was quite graceful to the boy and ordered his enrolment amongst his servants. He spoke full of praise about Purenba - his courage, honesty, strength and wisdom. The great wrestler Kongyamba was also ordered to be enrolled as his servant. Then the King ordered them to collect and bring flowers for the worship of Thangjing the next day.

Happy at being enrolled Khamba returned home and narrated all about the incidents in the royal place and the honour he received being the son of a brave father, who was wise too.

Thoibi persuaded the King to built up a house for Khamba in the north of the royal palace and supply Khamba daily with the royal meals if the King was to honour the deserving son of a deserving father and so dear to him.

Thoibi informed her mother that the festival to worship the God Thangjing was quite near. She then went to the place of Khamba, who narrated all the developments cheerfully to her. Thoibi listened to her full contentment. However, she offered to collect the flowers for Khamba from the market and prohibited him to go to hills as it was full of risks and was difficult too. She cooked Khamba his meals for the next day and tied into packets wrapped with leaves and wound by silk thread giving seven rounds around.

On the morrow Kongyamba came for Khamba and finding him late scolded him, and ordered Khamba to carry his meals too. The terrain proved difficult for Khamba who had a petal soft skin. Jealous of him Kongyamba conspired to put him to more difficulties intimidating Khamba of the Kings wrath. Kongyamba pointed to a place in the south and said that Khamba's father used to gather flowers for the King from there. Khamba went to the place with great difficulties but found no flowers there. Tired and sorry at that he prayed to God Thangjing and at once blew a wind toward's him carrying the smell of flowers from a distance as if to show

him the real place where flowers were in abundance. He thanked God Thangjing and saluting at the tree he climbed it to pluck flowers. He plucked the flowers and threw them down on the grassy space bellow. None of the petals got bruised. He was happy and so sang the Khulang-Isei, a song in honour of the Princess Thoibi. Kongyamba heard the song. At this Kongyamba grew more jealous. Again he asked Khamba to carry his flowers to which Khamba refused. A qurrel broke out between them. After a while they stopped quarrelling and fighting and set for eating their meals as both were hungry. Khamba's meals cooked by Thoibi had a special flavour of its own which lured Kongymba who came near him to enquire about it. At that moment some crows did fly away with Kongyamba's cakes. He was annoyed at that and returned home with a sullen face and even refused to allow his younger wife wash his feet and take care of him.

On the other hand Khamba returned home gladly to be received by Thoibi who exclaimed, "Here comes my lord, and my master", washed his feet and gave him fruits to eat.

Having lost his peace of mind Kongyamba sent his men to enquire as to where from Khamba got such delicious food? Annoyed, Thoibi ordered her men to drive them off and they returned to Kongyamba immediately. He decided to revenge on Khamba and manipulated the King to order that all should join the worship - dressed in gay and costly dress aiming to keep Khamba out of the festival, as he was poor and couldn't afford such a dress bedecked with gold and jewels.

Khamba was very much sorry for not having the

prospect of joining the festival. Kongyamba gathered the village folk at the gateway of Khamba. When Khamnu asked him the motive behind the gathering, Kongyamba replied roughly, "Have you no ears? The whole day long I have been announcing the King's order with all my energies! Get thou lost."

Khamnu wept at the rude behaviour and for the anxieties of Khamba. Khamba too wept, with broken hearts they got asleep at night and they dreamt their parents standing beside them. They advised Khamnu and Khamba to go to Thonglen and get back their royal dresses kept in his custody. Next morning they awoke while it was yet to be dawned and went straight to Thonglen's place. Thonglens men caught them suspecting as thieves and produced them before him the early morning. Thonglen recognized them and as such engaged his servants to the care of the brother and the sister; gave them the dresses and sent his men to built their house anew.

On the other side Thoibi came to their place with her maid Senu carrying dresses and jewellery for Khamnu and Khamba but were confused to see the house of Khamba built anew.

Thoibi was the more surprised to see Khamnu and Khamba in the varandah dressed gorgeously, for she thought Khamba to have married to a rich woman to her ignorance. However, the confusion was no more there when they discovered the facts.

On the day of the festival Firoijamba, Khamnu and Khamba went together to the festival. There they saw Princes Thoibi riding in her dooli. Kongyamba distributing the flowers among the nobles, to the King first, the Queen

second and so on.

Khamba feared to see it all and asked for the Maibi Hanbi's counsel. He first set the flowers before the God Thangjing and then he presented the flowers to the great ones, first to the King, and then to the Queen and other High officials of the State accordingly. His flowers pleased the King, the Queen and the nobles the more who reciprocated with rare gifts presented to him, many time more than that were given to Kongyamba.

In the dancing session that followed Kongyamba and his wife danced followed by Thoibi and Khamba who danced and sang before the idol of God whirling around until they concluded kneeling in salutation before the image. People were highly pleased and cheered them shouting.

Kongyamba grew more jealous and angry at Khamba's success. Thereafter, the people began the practice of Lamchel and wrestling.

The officers of the Pannas were bidden to choose their champions. Again it was Khamba chosen as the champion, for he ran quite steadily and in a great speed, in long strides and his chest held low. He overtook Nongbal Kongyamba who ran very fast with his head held high until he covered a short distance. The race competition in the year was ordained to be comparatively over a longer track.

Khamba was chosen as the chief of the race and wresting party while Kongyamba was in deep anxiety how to win over Khamba in the race, for all the previous year he was the champion all along. He conspired to have the people in his side and preached them the concocted faith

that in the event of a poor man like Khamba winning in the race this year the country will be ravaged by a famine beyond the prospect of the poor countrymen's survival. He advised the people to make the propaganda around.

On the day of the competition, the people informed Khamba that his name had been deleted from the list of competitors. Kongyamba came and told Khamba on his face that it shall be a very bad omen if Khamba, a poorest of the poor is to join the race for that would invite a great famine in the country which the people could not withstand.

Khamba believed in the statement and returned home with a broken heart and told Khamnu all about it. Finding no alternative she advised her brother to consult her father-in-law Leikeirakpa Nongthouba.

Accordingly Khamba met him and offered due respect bowing before him. Nongthouba took him to the King.

The King permitted Khamba to join the race if it had not been over. Encouraged at this Khamba went to the racing ground. The race was about to start then and the runners were in the queue kneeling.

Feiroijamba, his brother-in-law accompanied Khamba to the racing track. At once they shouted aloud to inform that the King had allowed Khamba to join the competition.

Kongyamba asked him to run with him but Khamba said it was not yet his time to start. He took his position at the starting, after entreating all the Leikeirakpas and making his prayers devotedly took his leap. He ran so swiftly that at once he overtook the pony that carried

Feiroijamba and started prior to him. Onward he kept his marc h and got past all the running athletes, even though they had started prior to him. At last he reached Kongyamba, running slowly as he got tired. Kongyamba's friends obstructed Khamba but in vain. The runners were evenly positioned during the last minutes of the race.

The women from the side greeted their dear ones encouraging for the victory. Khamnu also was there to greet her brother. She shouted : "Run on Khamba, for thy fathers' honour."

Thonglen, his fathers friends shouted : "Here is the lion thy father touched, leap up and break its horn".

Khamba as if summed up all his powers within leapt up seven cubits high and broke the lions horn, and greeted the King, Queen and other nobles present. Kongyamba followed next.

The King was highly pleased with Khamba and presented him a coat embroidered with gold. The Queen and the other nobles too showered precious gifts on him. Khamba became the champion in the other games and sports like wrestling, weight lifting and tossing the caber.

Thereafter, going back to the village he and Khamnu distributed largesse of many cloths among the elders in the village.

Defeated on all counts Kongyamba in great anguish wanted to revenge upon Khamba secretly by spelling magic on him and prayed to the gods to grant him a trick which the gods didn't and Kongyamba was totally frustrated.

The more Kongyamba is affronted by despair the more grows his vengeance against Khamba and this time

he built a hut, where he decided to invoke a spirit familiar to him but here, too, he failed in his mission. No spirit could he invoke. Then as he went out one day he met some women from the Kshumal kingdom fishing. He shouted at them - "Ye women from Kshumal, why do ye fish in the river of Moirang? Have ye not the Ikop and Waithou rivers to fish in"?

They answered him saying - "There is a terrible bull roaming in the reeds bordering the waters of Waithou which has in the meantime killed a man. So we dare not fish in there."

At once an intriguing design played in his mind to make Khamba a victim to this bull. He took the bull to be a gift of the God Thangjing in answer to his prayers. Promptly he went to the King in the guise of a Maibi.

The King asked him, "Where from come thou?"

Kongyamba replied - "God Thangjing has spoken in my ears, entrusted me to come with the mission to inform you at his behest that this year His desires will be satiated only with the flesh of the mighty bull roaring in the reeds that border the rivers of Waithou and Ikop. My servant Khamba has already vowed that he would kill the bull in my honour and for the welfare of the land for he is a brave man always ready to perform great deeds".

At this the King summoned Khamba and asked about the vow. Khamba denied having made any such vows. The cunning Kongyamba, heard the denial and before the King charged him for lying, he twisted the whole fact at once and informed the King that it was Khamba to bribe him to state before the King all these. He rebuked the whole clan that Khamba belonged as liars. Khamba

got frowned at this and entered into a quarrel with Kongyamba right in front of the King. This being an indecent thing before the King he ordered them to stop it. Khamba at once obliged the King, quite politely and asked for the King's permission if he could go to kill the bull. The King was highly pleased at his humble submission and promised to offer Thoibi in marriage with Khamba. Thonglen was there as witness to the King's promise. He was very pleased at the offer. He wished that it should really happen that way. So, to make the King's promise doubly confirmed he set seven marks on the lintel pillar of the Kangla as a token of the King's oath.

Then Thangarakpa dressed with a gay head dress comprising of a number of rare feathers led a delegation of 60 persons to reach the message to the Kshumal King.

The Kshumal King was in his durbar with the ministers. Though he could not believe the message unless he witness it, he was glad to know that the adventurous brave young man was of the Kshumal origin. So, to witness the daring event he ordered his people to erect 700 machans each for the Kshumal and the Moirang folk. Accordingly everything was made ready.

Khamnu was very much anxious at the turn of events. She was much concerned for Khamba. At last she recollected that this bull was the one that was so dear to her father, who tended and worshipped it. Intelligent as she was, she advised Khamba to utter his father's name into the bull's ear, and presented Khamba with a rope of silk to show to the bull.

In God's name, Khamba set for his mission. Initially he could not find the bull inside the reeds and advancing

further into the slopes of the hills, he saw it. He gently called the bull at which it came rushing towards him.He had to bend aside to avoid a possible knock. The people laughed at him. Khamba answered them bravely that he was not afraid but looking for the right opportunity Then he stood firm and caught the bull by the horn and the fight for mastery went on. Suddenly Khamba rode on to the bull's back but the bull carried him deep into the jungle. There Khamba remembered Khamnu's advice. He uttered his father's name into the bull's ears and showed the silken rope too. The bull remembered his master and recognised the rope. It took the rope willingly at the neck, and became tamed and obedient. Khamba brought the bull to the place where Khamnu and Thoibi stood.

Kongyamba took hold of the rope as if to help Khamba, pull the bull on. The bull did not move. But Kongyamba was all set to snatch the credit of taming the bull and so announced that he rescued Khamba who fell into a ditch while pulling the bull. At this Kongyamba's friend's pooh poohed the bravery of Khamba.

The King was confused at this. To solve the mystery the King asked Kongyamba to fight the bull. Afraid, instead of fighting Kongyamba jumped on to one of the machans for safety. Then Khamba fought with the bull bravely. He first took hold of the tail and threw it. The bull fell aside again. The spectators were all praise for him. He was amply rewarded by the King. The Kshumal King proposed to Moirang King to hand over the brave young man to him as he was childless too. The Moirang King refused to oblige him.

Khamba killed the bull in honour of the God

Thangjing. Happy at the demise of the bull the King ordered a festivity inhonour of God Thangjing and ordained that archery will form part of the festivity. Kongyamba was ordered to pick up the arrows shot by the King and Khamba to pick up those of the Yubaraj. To join the archery, the Yubaraj asked Thoibi to give him his gold embroidered coat. Thoibi failed to do so as the coat had been presented to Khamba in the mean time.

Now everything being ready for the archery. The Maibas sang charms over the King's bows and arrows. After that as the King set for the shooting he saluted the bow before lifting the same and started shooting the arrows one after the other. Every time the King sent off an arrow from his bow, Kongyamba fetched them back to the King.

When the turn of the Yubaraj came, Khamba readied himself tightening the cloths around his waist and across the loins. After the bow and the arrows of the Yubaraj were charmed again by the Maiba, he shot his arrow from the bow, and Khamba ran so fast to bring back the arrows that his cloths got loose and the Yubaraj happened to notice his gold embroidered coat worn by Khamba. He got terribly enraged knowing it well that the coat had been presented to Khamba without his knowledge. As Khamba fetched the arrow and presented to him he did not take it back and turned his face aside.

Kongyamba took the opportunity to take back the arrow from Khamba and hand it over to the Yubaraj. Pleased at the polite pretence the Yubaraj said, "My daughter Thoibi will be yours and yours only and I shall send the marriage gifts within five days hence".

Nongthouba was surprised at the sudden turn of things and asked of the Yubaraj, "Is Khamba not worth of Thoibi?"

The Yubaraj answered with contempt, "I hate him, and shall not see his face".

Nongthouba argued, "Is your daughter a fruit or a flower that you promise to offer her to anyone and every-one? Is she such a trifling object?" Nongtholba reminded the Yubaraj the Kings declaration the other day to give Thoibi to Khamba in marriage, pleased at Khamba's heroic ability to kill the bull. The Yubaraj disowned the responsibility of the King's promise and insisted on his own will.

The King heard of the development and was in a great anxiety at this.

The Yubaraj went home back and ordered his wives to get all the gifts ready for marriage of Thoibi with Kongyamba within five days. So that Khamnu and Khamba could not present any kinds of gifts to Thoibi as the Yubaraj prohibited marketing by all his men except Kongyamba.

Helpless Khamba went to the place of Salang Maiba, a Kabui Naga friend of his father. As he approached the gate the Nagas keeping a watch to their headman's house seized him and confiscated the load Khamba carried with him on his back hung by a strap on the head. Then he was led to the pakhanval where Maiba sat. As he came near, Khamba questioned Maiba why his men seized him and confiscated the load of gifts brought for Maiba, who had been a friend of his father.

Maiba varified the identity of Khamba through a

series of interrogations. When he was convinced that Khamba was the son of his friend he praised for Khamba's father a lot recollecting his daring battle against the Kabui Nagas. He showed Khamba the place where his brave father fought the Nagas. Maiba sent his men to gather fruits for Khamba and they brought two baskets full of them. Maiba added some more gifts from his stock as presents to Khamnu and Thoibi. Khamba brought them all home. Thoibi set them in ten dishes and consulted the Chief Rani to be ready with ten maids to receive the gifts.

On the day fixed for the marriage, Kongyamba came with his gifts for Thoibi but she, unwilling to receive them pretended to suffer from a severe fever, having fallen in a spell of evil spirit. The Yubaraj confessed to Kongyamba the difficulty and reaffirmed his decision to offer Thoibi in marriage with him. Kongyamba returned.

Thereafter, when the Yubaraj went to retire and Thoibi arose and asked her maid Senu to make arrangements to present the gifts to the Queen. Senu cleaned the northern part of the varandah known as the mongsok which is specially meant for the women folk. She smeared the floor with mud afresh and arranged for the Queens to take their seats. The Queens came and took their positions.

In the meantime the Yubaraj went out to enjoy the archery along with the King. The Queen partook the fruits from their dishes.

Thereafter the Yubaraj returned from the archery game quite tired and thirsty too. Instead of water he preferred a glass of sour fruit juice.

Thoibi obliged him giving such a juice in a silver

cup. Her father relished it in great content and asked the name of the fruit. In disgust Thoibi answered, people call it 'cha-kao ma-kao'.

The Yubaraj asked where from she could get such a delicious fruit. She answered cunningly- "Why Papa? Do you forget that your son-in-law Khamba made them a present on the wedding day?"

Frowned at such a bold sarcastic and insulting reply from the daughter he threw his silver huqa at her. Hit by the huqa Thoibi fainted and the women started wailing over her body. He, too, broke down in tears and in utter helplessness said, "Thoibi my child, awake and go to your in-laws place the house of Khamba".

This sanction, even though unwilling brought back Thoibi to her senses. Seeing this the Yubaraj became angry again and sent for Kongyamba. He also sent for Khamba a message to appear before the Yubaraj to collect his gifts back.

On the other hand Kongyamba gathered his men and threatened Khamba to give up Thoibi. Khamba vehemently refused to oblige him. A quarrel broke out between them which ultimately turned into a fight. Khamba threw off the men on the ground. He grounded his prime rival Kongyamba and knelt on his chest and was about to kill him by pressing his throat but the on-lookers all attacked him together, tied him up. The Yubaraj happened to come there in the meantime on his giant elephant. He ordered the people to bind him with one of the elephants legs and beat him.

The mahut of the elephant knew that Khamba was innocent and so took pity, had mercy on him for which

he tied him loosely so that Khamba's blood circulation was not affected nor he faced and respiratory problem. They goaded the elephant but it never moved at the will of God Thangjing. At last Kongyamba took a spear and pierced it into the body of Khamba. Thus after the night-long torture on his body they saw Khamba almost dead when it was dawn. Being sure that he would die they set him apart from the elephant and abandoned there.

At night Goddess Panthoibi appeared before Thoibi in a dream and told her all about the torture to Khamba. It was almost the dawn. Thoibi arose abruptly and taking a knife in hand set out to rescue Khamba. There she found Khamba in his ties. She cut the knots and chafed his limbs. The circulation of blood regained. He came to his senses and asked Thoibi to send him to Khamnu. Thoibi sent some one for Khamnu. She came and saw her brother's sad plight. Khamnu broke into tears. Her husband Feiroijamba also came to his aid.

Hearing all these nonsense, Nongthouba got angry. He bade his sons to inform the Chirap.

The slaves of Thonglen informed their lord all about Khamba. Angry at this Thonglen went to the Chirap with all his men armed and ready for a fight. Feiroijamba also went to the Yubaraj personally to report the matter. He narrated the cruel torture thrice but the Chirap was not moved at all. Nongthouba in a rage shouted: " Who dared to touch my Khamba?" Then turning to the Yubaraj he questioned - "My lord! Hast thou the power of taking life?" He continued, "So long I am alive none can kill Khamba. Let us go to the King."

They informed the King everything. The King •

became highly offended against the Yubaraj; yet being afraid that the Yubaraj might revolt against him he did not call him.

The Yubaraj was a fierce fighter having killed all the generals of the King. So he feared for his own life too. Besides he might seek help from the Angoms who were hostile to him. The King punished all those guilty of torturing Khamba. Tactfully he sent the Yubaraj into the prison, until Khamba recovered. He sent his physician to attend Khamba and kept on sending food and gifts daily for Khamba. When recovered the Yubaraj was freed thinking that he would bear no malice against Khamba.

On being free the Yubaraj called his wives and Thoibi. At the time Thoibi was tending Khamba. He frowned and decided to sell her to Kubo in lieu of gold and silver thinking it were better to remain childless instead of having a daughter like her. So he summoned Hanjaba and bade him to take the girl to Tamurakpa.

Thoibi bade farewell to Khamba but requested him not to forget her and promised that she would return back to him. Wailing very sadly she obliged her father. The Queen and all her maids too wept. Then she went to Hanjaba who had for him the secret orders to sell her out.

On their way to Tamurakpa she met Khamba who wept a lot not being able to part with her. Worried for Thoibis troubles in walking all the long route he picked up a stuff lying by the side and offered it to Thoibi. Thoibi wished that her lovers last minute gift should better live than dry out. So, she planted the stuff at the spot wishing that if her love for Khamba were genuine the tree would blossom with flowers to vindicate her chaste love. She

also left a mark on the roadside.Then she reached Kubo where Tamurakpa counted out her price in gold and silver to Hanjaba.

Tamurakpa was however kind to Thoibi and sent her in to live with his daughter Changing Kanbi.

The jealous women-folk of Kubo successfully conspired against Thoibi to persuade Tamurakpa to send her for fishing and gather fuelwood's. Tamurakpa bade the women stop wrangling and weave one cloth each instead. Thoibi became extremely busy with her works assigned. One day she dreamt that Khamba was there helping in her job but when awake she was very sad to know that it were only a dream. This invoked God Thangjing have mercy on her.

One day Tamurakpa heard his daughter reproaching Thoibi calling her a way-ward girl for refusing to marry Kongyamba and falling in love with the poor Khamba. He was about to beat his daughter angry at her unkind behaviour but Thoibi had to stay him. The two girls were weaving clothes, too, like the other women. Thoibi was quite expert in the art of weaving. Jealous Kanbi made several holes into the cloth woven by Thoibi with the help of porcupine quill's. Thoibi made no complaint but mended them all. When the clothes were ready Tamurakpa liked the one woven by Thoibi the most.

The other day as Thoibi was working at the loom, the wind brought ashes on the loom. She understood that the wind was blowing for Moirang. She recollected her home and remembered Khamba and wept. On the other hand Yubaraj also felt her absence and repented for his cruel action. So, he sent his men to take Thoibi back home,

and bade Kongyamba meet her on her way home.

Thanking Tamurkpa and the God of Kubo, Thoibi set for Moirang. As she approached the place where she left a token mark on a stone at the roadside she saw the stuff planted by her blossoming. Kongyamba also reached about the spot. His men saw Thoibi coming and shouted, "Lo, the Princess is ahead".

Thoibi heard this and asked her attendants sent by Tamurakpa to see if Khamba is there and advised them stay near him and stay apart if it were Kongyamba.

She sat on the red cloth offered by Kongyamba to her to sit with him. She sat there but placed a stick in between them. She asked for fruits and Kongyamba happily provided them all but she did eat none of it pretending to be tired of the journey from Kubo. She asked his pony to go to ride home. As she arrived her home all shed their tears of joy, being reunited.

Kongyamba realized that Thoibi had befooled him. He became sad, for his men too did not help him this time. Now he tried to hearken the King's ministers.

Thonglen and Nongthouba sent men to guard Thoibi and Khamba. The matter was taken to the King's durbar the next day. The King wished that the matter be decided through an ordeal of the spear.

In the meantime an old women came to the durbar and complained that there appeared a tiger in the jungle and the village folk is panicked at its presence. At once the King declared that it must be killed and promised Thoibi in reward to the killer. He fenced around the jungle calling the hui rai. The people gathered at the machans to witness the dangerous game. The whole field looked like

a white cloth covering it. The two came forward with their spears at hand. The King ordered them to kill the tiger.

Khamba and Kongyamba, the two rival contenders for Thoibi entered the jungle and found a cage with the body of a girl killed by the tiger. They saw the tiger too but could not kill it because the spears turned aside by the cage bars. Suddenly the tiger jumped upon Kongyamba and fatally injured him. Khamba wounded the beast and drive it off. Then he carried Kongyamba to his father's place.

Thonglen aroused Khamba taunting him for fearing the tiger, which his father killed six of them without fear.

Khamba was electrified at the mention of his father's name and in honour of him he went to the jungle again fearlessly. The tiger jumped upon him, but Khamba finished the tiger pushing the spear into his mouth.

The King amply rewarded him and conferred on him the title Pukramba. Thoibi was married to Khamba and Khamnu to Feiroijamba. But divine personalities as they were, the worldly life was not for Thoibi and Khamba. Tragedy came down on them soon.

Some days after their stately marriage Khamba suspected the sincerity of Thoibi. Thoughts of adultery on her part vitiated the mind of Khamba. One night, so as to testify Thoibis sincerity he took a stick at hand and pushed at Thoibi from outside. Thoibi suspected this to be a lascivious attempt of a male other than her husband and cried out angrily, "Who is that ? I am a chaste women dedicated whole heartedly to Khamba", saying this in a fit of rage she took a spear and throw it towards the

direction of the stick coming from. The spear wounded Khamba fatally. He cried out for help. Recognizing him from the voice Thoibi came out and took the dying Khamba in. Not being capable to bear the shock she slew her on to his dead body and the couple were cremated in the same pyre. The funeral flames consumed their heavenly bodies on the pyre. Gods were they, not as mortals, and to them was denied the happiness of long life and children ! ❑

GLOSSARY

Angom----------------- A Manipuri community or section.

Ashwameda---------- It is a chapter of the great Mahabharat narrating the horse-sacrifice performed by Yudhisthira, the First Pandava of Hastinapur, before the great Mahabharat War.

Bishnupur or -------- Bishenpur The ancient capital city of Manipur formed by the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Bijoy Pamchali------ This is a Meitei Purana describing the Meitei chronicle.

Chitrangoda---------- Crown Princess of Manipur and wife of Arjuna, the third Pandava and the mother of Babhrubahana.

Durbar----------------- Royal court.

Ghoror Dau---------- Titulary deity of the Bishnupriya Manipuris standing for god of the house.

Gobaror Pani--------- Cow-dung water.

Jewelled land -------- A land of jewels, i.e. Manipur(Mani=Jewel+Pur=Land).

Kut---------------------- Folk-Festivals of the Mizos.

Khual------------------- A Mizo word meaning guest.

Kangla----------------- The hall of coronater or the capital city of the Meitei Leipak or the Meitei land.

Keibul Lamjao------- It is the floated national park located in Manipur.

Kanglasa-------------- or Nongsaba The half-lion and half-dragon, - the State symbol of Manipur.

Khatang---------------- A Bishnupriya Manipuri word meaning side-yard and backyard house.

Kshumalpokpa------ The ancestral deity of the Kshumal.

Leikeirakpas---------- An official who looks after leikei or quarters of a Manipuri village.

Lam--------------------- A Mizo word meaning folk dance.

Loitas Bangi---------- A particular action of Mizo dance.

Man or Mogh-------- Burmese people.

Mukhial---------------- Headman.

Magloo----------------- An old Assamese word referring Manipur .

Mei-Moglais----------- In Sylhet and Cachar, the Manipuris are called as the Mei-Moglai, while the Burmese call. Manipuri as Cassay or Kassey.

Maibi----------------	Manipuri Priestess.
Mangsok------------	Northern portion of the verandah of a Manipuri house.
Mahut---------------	Elephant driver.
Nangin--------------	The State Bird of Manipur.
Pagri-----------------	Turban.
Rukmini-------------	Daughter of King Bhisamaka and the lady-in-love of Sri Krishna.
Rasleela-------------	Manipuri traditional dance.
Rathbond Bazar-	It is the biggest woman marked in Asia situated in the Imphal city of Manipur.
Sangai---------------	Brown antered deer- the State Animal of Manipur
Shiroy lily-----------	The State Flower of Manipur.
Shastras------------	Religious holy books of the Hindus.
Shangrila-----------	A French word meaning a beautiful land.
Uningthiu-----------	The State tree of Manipur.
U'than---------------	A Bishnupriya Manipuri word meaning court-yard.
Ved Vyas-----------	The author of the epic the Mahabharata.

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INDEX

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Manipur

The land of blue green hills, cascading rapids carpets of flowers and unwinding rivers.

Manipur, described as the *Jewel of India* has its Legend that the discovery of her led to the gods dance in delight. The divine dance form prevails as Manipuri dance. It is a classical dance form with delicate mudras of the hand restrained movements and a graceful expression.

Manipur is a mosaic of traditions and cultural patterns, best represented by its dance forms. The *Ras* songs and dances express the *Leelas* (sports) of *Lord Krishna* as a child with the *Gopis* milkmaids) of Brindavan, and depict their yearning for communion with the Lord. The tribal dances of Manipur are the expression of love, creativity and aestheticism of the tribal people of the State. Manipuris were earlier recognised as skilful warriors and still practise the arts of wrestling, sword fighting and martial arts. *Sogol Kangiei* (Manipuri Polo) is the principal sport of the State, for polo is believed to have originated here. *Mukna Kangjei* (Wrestling Hockey) is also a very popular game in Manipur. The game is part of a ceremonial function and enjoyed due patronage in the olden days. Another popular game known as *Yubi-Lakpi* (Manipur Rugby) is played, using a greased coconut.

Languages spoken :

Manipuri, Hindi, English, Mizo, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Nepali and Local Dialects.

Major Religions :

Hinduism, Christianity, Islamism and Senamahism.

Entry formalities :

Inner Line Permit is required for domestic tourists and *Restricted Area Permit* is required for foreign nationals. Details can be obtained from the nearest Govt. of India Tourist Office and the Manipur State Tourist Office.